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You sharpen your pencil. Then, as you close your pen-knife, you glance at one of the blades. You see engraved on it the word 'Sheffield' and it comes as no surprise. Nor should it wherever you are. Last year over 300,000 *dozen* British steel pen-knives were exported : to practically every country in the world. Pen-knives or pipelines, razors or railways, the story is the same. Wherever there is steel there is British steel.

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Western Germany: The Human Scene

by NICOLAS POWELL, D.S.O.

The imaginative exercise of putting oneself in other people's shoes becomes a geographical one when the chief object and method of the exercise is a removal in space. It is far from easy to put ourselves in the West Germans' shoes without living in West Germany; the author, who has this qualification, helps us to overcome our disability and to feel some places where the shoes pinch

If one is insignificant enough one can travel from Berlin by train. Crossing the zonal frontier at Helmstedt it travels on—a perfectly ordinary train—from the 'Democratic' zone into the Western zone. It even has first class compartments: inside Western Germany, except on international trains, there are only second and third class. It looks perfectly normal otherwise; and then when one looks around at the usual injunctions *Nicht Hinauslehnen*, *Vietato Sporgersi* that students everywhere consider fair booty, one notices that red enamelled plaques in Russian have been added, and that the Persil advertisement alongside the mirror carries the text "Towards a better life through improved achievement in production"—overtones that make one almost welcome advertising in the 'Free World'. At the end of the corridor is a frame with the names of the two firms responsible for the interior and exterior carriage work, and the name of the senior railway official responsible for maintenance, and then the bright enjoiner "... and during the journey you, dear traveller, are responsible for keeping the coach clean".

Yet in the lavatory are no towels, soap or water. The punctual trains of Western Germany are kept scrupulously clean, and indeed there is always a travelling char. Because one is usually so spoilt, I complain to her. She says: "I am sorry 'they' have used them all up. The train is so full of them. It is always the same. Every day in this direction. Poor things." In the third class coach seen through the glass at the end 'they'—the people from the Eastern zone—are standing in the corridor. And in fact at every station 'they' get out and rush to the arms of their relations and embrace, in scenes of emotion that are unusual in this relatively undemonstrative yet sentimental country.

There is no-one unaffected. My house-keeper sends packets every month to the East.

My secretary has an uncle who got out when the production manager and the chief engineer of his boiler factory disappeared. The office-boy last week had to take his uncle out into the town to get him to talk naturally, "to warm him up" as he put it. The uncle had come from the East where things had been very bad after the June revolt.

Of course I, not being German, can only join the train at Brunswick or Hanover, and I wonder whether the people in my compartment (second class) are a cross-section. On my left a young and rather self-contained girl is reading a novel that looks gloomy enough, to judge from its dust-jacket of a hungry-looking mother and her adolescent son: *Advent*, translated from the Russian. Eventually she brightens up in response to the question, is she going back? Not on her life. She is on her way to Holland to marry, and indeed she wears the proof, a plain gold engagement ring. The question came from a jolly but tired-looking motherly person from East Berlin, on her way to visit her son, who has set up as a small-holder near Cologne after having been happily settled in Königsberg, in East Prussia. She fortifies herself from time to time with a jam-jar of currant and raspberry compote, and slivers of bread and cheese. The waiter from the dining-car put on at the zonal frontier sells her a pot of coffee, paid for from a secret hoard of West marks in her bosom, which she drinks seriously and with a preoccupied air. The aroma permeates the compartment, and she comments: "Delicious but a bit cold. But it is coffee." Living in East Berlin, she can cross into the West sector, and could no doubt bring back good coffee if she wanted to. Probably the only thing that stops her is the formidable barrier of the unfavourable ratio of about 1:5 from East to West marks.

In the corner seats near the corridor sit an elderly doctor and his wife, who have taken

refuge here from the smell of the lavatory at the end of the carriage. They came originally from Hamburg, where they still have a daughter, and are going to visit another in the Rhineland. They were left in Saxony "by the purest chance" and he is full of stories: of market-gardeners and their pea production, who in return for seed have to give back the major proportion of their crop to the authorities; of building licences for repairs. He and his wife are well dressed, with deadly middle-class respectability, and he consults his gold half-hunter, while she picks at a diamond clip. "Oh," she says, "over here in the West 'they' don't realize what we have to go through to come at all: the ration cards to be given up, the permission, the queueing at the police-station. And then 'they' can't understand the cost of the tickets: outward journey only, and we have to pay the return at four times the price." But this couple are going back. They hope to visit the daughter in Vienna whom they have not seen for twelve years. Foreign currency is their difficulty. "If only 'they' could see the difference,"

she says with tears almost in her eyes. "The houses here as pretty as toys and everything built up again, and the people on the stations so busy and gay. The neon lights. Oh my goodness."

No-one would say that the rail journey through Western Germany from Brunswick to the Rhine is anything but matter-of-fact. The stations are in more or less working order; the lady from Saxony remarks: "Nothing has been done to Magdeburg since the day the war ended." And it is true that there are people on the streets rushing about being busy, darting into the shops and restaurants. And if the countryside is brighter it is because we are coming further south and west all the time. And after all Spring doesn't follow the Potsdam Convention. Not unless one wants it to, but this good woman is certainly wearing green-tinted spectacles. The others all agree and look out of the window smiling at the meetings on the station platforms, because they will soon have their meeting. No-one speaks of the return, going back to school, the parole from a prison without

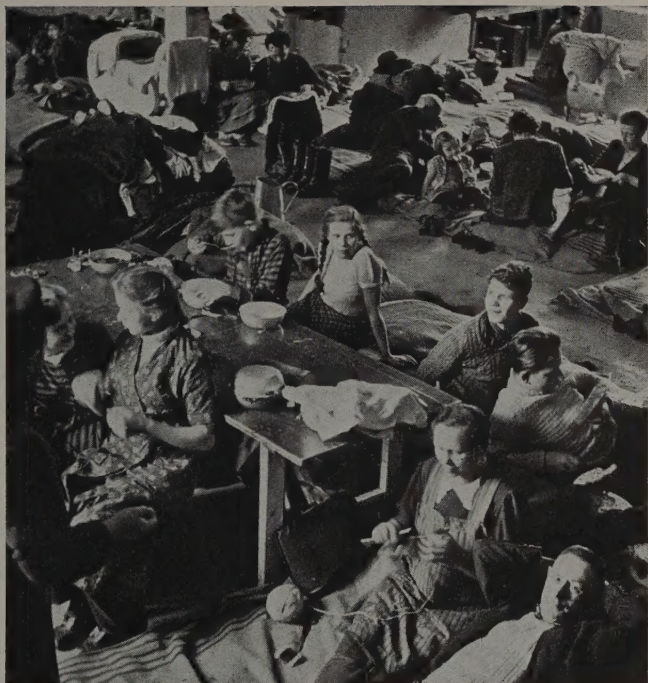
bars; it is difficult to imagine it oneself, padded in the security of being a member of an Occupying Power. They must guess that as well, however, and it is a compliment that they talk freely, making this overwhelmingly sad conversation. I cannot help feeling sorry.

On another inter-zonal train there was a woman coming over for a short busman's holiday, to work as a laboratory assistant. She talked without stopping for four-and-a-half hours, story after story to get the sympathy of her listeners, wanting to be liked, making herself hoarse as she appealed to their fellow-feeling. Her voice had a penetrating pitch which was profoundly irritating. The British habit of silence in trains is far more considerate to others in the long run. And then I reflected that she had had a lifetime of keeping silent, and that four hours was not too long to expect her to talk. Yet she typified a trait in the German character, in her desire to be loved, for with it goes an inability to understand that their fellow-men will not love



A. J. Thornton

By the end of last year 2,100,000 people had left the Eastern for the Western zones of Germany. A person provided with an exit permit from the Eastern authorities, implying the intention to return, could travel by train or road; those not so provided could enter clandestinely the West Sector from the East Sector of Berlin, but could only proceed further westwards by air, as other means of communication were in Soviet control. In one month, March 1953, over 40,000 such refugees were housed (right) in temporary emergency transit centres in West Berlin until (below) they could be flown out to the Federal Republic



Paul Popper Ltd



By courtesy of the Press & Information Office of the Federal Government of Western Germany, Bonn



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Lively crowds frequent the Kurfürstendamm in West Berlin, dominated by the ruined Gedächtniskirche. A few yards away from this is the boundary between the East and West Sectors, marking the frontier between two conflicting views of life

them unconditionally.

Berlin, where she had just left her husband, has been described before, and never better than in Rose Macaulay's "that melancholy metropolis". Empty blocks, each with a pile of bricks neatly stacked in the middle of this flood-land, certainly reinforce the impression now. The surviving undamaged buildings, in their *Jugendstil* or grey Wilhelmine gloom, are infrequent enough to catch the eye. The new is very new, and also rare enough to be remarked upon in amongst the patched or abandoned house-fronts. There is no town which conveys such a sensation of suspension in space, a feeling which—to speak out of personal experience—is allied to that of imprisonment: a city under anaesthetic, in suspended animation. This sensation is underlined by the aircraft and the nineteen trains per day which convey everything from chocolate, milk and beer to lettuces in, and the A.E.G. and Siemens products out. Other than Venice there can be no town less suitable for dogs—its trees were destroyed by bombing or used for fuel in the post-war years—but both Venice and Berlin seem to have more dogs than anywhere else. The tax on dogs is about £6 for the first one and rises on a progressive scale. Yet it is not uncommon to see three *Dachels* or a pair of boxers in the Kurfürstendamm, whose meat like that of their masters has to come in across the no-man's-land of Brandenburg.

I can think of no other great city where there seems to be such a need for entertainment, and where so much is provided. This is partly due to the clarity of the air, and the bracing climate comparable with that of Madrid where one also awakes bright after little sleep. There is music with the meals and plenty of dancing, and bell-boys to carry your hat. The Neapolitans, who are also traditionally gay, also have a volcano just behind them. Never lovely by all accounts, Berlin is now brilliant with lights at night; but by day, great gaps and telegraph poles serving for street lamps are all too plain. And for the first time one feels that one knows what is meant by the phrase "taking in each other's washing". This is part of the life of any great town, but here more than usual people exist by service, for there is little else to do. And behind all the charm, all Berliners—acute and intelligent as citizens of an (erstwhile) capital can be—are quick to take offence, careful to insist on preserving their moral position, but very sensitive.

This tension is the outward sign of a split personality induced by the divergence be-

tween East and West. Apart from the barriers and their attendant guards there is evidence enough, even inside the two Sectors. Immediately behind the Gedächtniskirche, fifty yards from the best-known night haunts, at the Bahnhof Zoo, the uniformed ladies of the 'Democratic' railways, not over-jolies *laides* in para-military Russian high-buttoned uniforms with red and gold shoulder-straps, answering coldly questions about the Soviet time-table, pretend not to know where the nearest *Wechselstube* or foreign exchange office is. In the mornings long queues of women, changing East marks for the few West they get in return, crowd these soul-destroying crosses between betting-saloons and the setting of Menotti's *Consul*.

Is the little boy from the East Sector asking for thirty pennings West outside the grand hotel, and getting a mark, the smallest change I have, typical? He dances off gleefully. I shout "What do you want it for?" "For my tram-fare back." Like 'they' whose sense changes with the direction one faces, 'back' is a word full of meaning. Because he and others like him at least come over to see what it is like, he is important—and far from unusual. Above all Berlin is the outlet, the capitalist window, the witness not only to East Germany, but to visitors from as far East as it is possible to go. That is its strength, and the Berliners know it.

They are at home there, but there are also the refugees, who have had to reach Berlin, and from East Berlin to get into West Berlin, and then satisfy their welcomers. They fly out to Hamburg and Hanover daily. These are political refugees who have been interrogated in turn by each of the Western Allies and by the West-Germans. But once over they are no longer refugees. Except for accents from Thuringia or Pomerania, only their 'democratic' and rather old-fashioned clothes betray them. For the first day or two out of camp they might look into the jewellers' shops of the Rhineland and the furriers', but not, they will tell you, because they want the stuff, but because it is wonderful to see it all again and to know that such things exist.

In Düsseldorf, the show window of the Ruhr, plenty of money is spent on food and sleek and distinguished Mercedes costing about £2000; but nothing larger than a mink stole and not much more than costume jewellery is bought, because whereas entertainment and transport can be claimed on the firm, furs cannot. And the waiter will always expect you to take the bill for your income-tax return.



courtesy of Verkehrsamt Berlin

Entertainment is not the least of the attractions that Western Germany has to offer in contrast to the East. Berlin, especially, flaunts its gaiety and (above) night-clubs flourish while (right) new theatres such as the Schiller Theater add to the bright lights. (Opposite) The Breidenbacher Hotel in Düsseldorf, completely destroyed in 1943 and now rebuilt, forms an appropriate background to the sleek, post-war motor-cars that display the newly recovered wealth of the Ruhr







By courtesy of the German Tourist Information Bureau

(Above) New commercial buildings in Frankfurt-am-Main typify "the ant-like activity which changes the face of every city from month to month" in Western Germany. (Below) The annual Industrial Fair in Hanover, "attended by impatient buyers from every continent", bears witness to economic revival

By courtesy of the German Tourist Information Bureau



If some of the functions of the capital have been shared out to, or rather taken on by, cities like Düsseldorf and Bonn—Leipzig has been succeeded by Hanover whose Spring Industrial Fair is attended by impatient buyers from every continent, and the Book Fair now held in Frankfurt-am-Main already has a European significance—only in Berlin and Munich has one the feeling of being in what is so aptly conveyed by the word *Weltstadt*. But such nuances are of little interest to the young refugee, who by the very act of crossing to the West becomes another working man, and no longer a problem as such, except that 2,100,000 refugees had abandoned the East up to the end of 1953, and the draining of the Eastern zone is in itself a problem to the Federal government. He maintains his ties by correspondence, and if he is feeling rich enough by telephone, by sending food-parcels home, and by visits from the family. Yet both by ideas and interests he is soon absorbed into the life of the West, and finds his way to the centres of industry. In this country of free enterprise, there are plenty of incentives for working. But he will tell you that, after paying contributions to social insurance, Berlin, church and income taxes, he has little to spend on himself.

Clothes are expensive and readily imported from abroad. Woollen goods from Great

Britain, ready-made clothes from Switzerland, and Italian silk ties and hosiery, and the young man is soon dressed in his "Dritte Mann", his duffle-coat and a compliment to the success of the film. Lodging in most large towns does not run under fifty marks per month, and food is correspondingly dear. Families still live in the "Bunker" air-raid shelters; and others that were bombed out forgo all pleasure in order to pay the instalments on the furniture, and still live in hope of government compensation. In certain trades, steel and the building industry particularly, there are opportunities of working overtime on Saturdays and Sundays, and at night the lights glare down until ten or later on Piranesi-like scenes of building activity. Not as in Great Britain round steel frames, but on reinforced concrete which in big projects is carried mixed to the work-place, or piped to mid-stream on the new Rhine bridges.

Yet probably the greatest incentive of all is the average of one million unemployed waiting for jobs. Intentionally, too, the building priorities were churches, and, not only for cultural reasons, places of amusement, opera-houses, cinemas and restaurants. It is true that with three exceptions, the Schiller Theater at Berlin and those at Bochum and Düsseldorf, the theatres have so far been built

The country districts are not neglected and well-planned estates of small houses, such as these at Geisenheim in the Rhineland, are springing up everywhere with the aid of subsidies from public funds

By courtesy of the Press & Information Office of the Federal Government of Western Germany, Bonn





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*The West Germans "work and relax by extremes": money energetically earned is spent with equal vigour.
(Above) Changing shifts at the Volkswagen Works, Wolfsburg. (Below) Carnival procession in Mainz*

courtesy of the German Tourist Information Bureau



out of the ruins of the old—it is also true that in some towns, such as Mannheim, the opera is still housed in a cinema, but that town has already given out 100,000 Deutsch-marks in prize-money without accepting a new design; and Frankfurt with the largest stage in Europe, rebuilt in the old municipal theatre, is probably not typical in having the reputation of spending more per year on its opera than on its university.

But although in a rich town the opera and concerts are often filled to capacity the standards and the prices are high, and the young worker falls back on the usual escapes and fantasies. As elsewhere, many hopes are pinned on lotteries and football pools, and it is surprising how many people attach real importance to the Zodiac, to the stars and predictions: more than would be normal in a people that had not long since found this sort of escape as promising as any other. And besides this general feeling of uncertainty and restlessness, many dream of a more practical escape by emigration. For this they have to save at least the fare—for Canada, for instance, the most favoured and welcoming goal, which accepted over 30,000 last year—and either to have a job waiting, or be in a skilled trade. Apart from cash and the quotas of the receiving countries, the key to these promised lands is partly the English language and partly freedom from family ties. English, too, is required by business houses where it has become the international means of communication, not least in the Middle East where German trade is exploring in order to find a substitute for the markets lost in South-East Europe.

The ant-like activity which changes the face of every city from month to month is the most striking feature of German progress. It is only to be explained, if explained at all, by the fact that Sunday is a day of entertainment, and that all relaxation is pushed into the period from Saturday evening until Monday morning at seven or eight. Long working hours are followed by strenuous pleasure with an early start as usual. They work and relax by extremes. On the one side is the desire to re-establish the standards lost in the 1947 currency reform, which overnight made this achievement possible. On the other is the commercial success of the exacting carnival time in Bavaria and the Rhineland, with special trains to bring inhabitants of less privileged provinces to the centres of hilarity. In Great Britain we believe in leisure and feel we have to work to obtain it. Here they believe in work—their “bee-complex” as a

young intellectual put it—and are thankful that there is sometimes leisure as a reward.

It is dangerous to generalize from the particular but sometimes details stand out clearly as the expression of some aspects of life in Western Germany. I caught a note of regret, for instance, in the town official who complained that he was going to have five hard hours passing the city budget through the council. “It was so easy before the war: five paid officials and it was all done; but now all the councillors are freely elected, and we have *you* to blame for that.” I did not need to answer that democracy is always more difficult than totalitarian methods, but that we would rather have the compensation of a little freedom for the loss of a little efficiency.

The old conceptions die hard. A very good friend, of great charm and scholarship, was talking about architecture. We were sitting in his flat eating dozens of sticky chocolate cakes, “Moor’s heads” to be precise.

“Of course”, he said, “it is a sad fact that all the greatest German cities, since the destruction of Dresden and Würzburg, lie outside the German frontiers: yes, Prague and Vienna.” Admittedly from the point of view of architecture he had made a point. “And then Zurich and Bern”—luckily there was no Swiss within miles—“and then of course Strassburg.” Oh heavens! Alsace and the French. How sensible that Strasbourg is the capital of the European movement. There could be no more provocative city from which to state that the old ideas are out of date, and that the French and German delegates are not on the soil of their fathers but merely in Europe. That this problem is appreciated in Western Germany is possibly indicated by the notices recently put up at the zonal frontiers: “You have been in Europe. You are entering Europe.”

If the Germans would regard France as a holiday goal, as they have done Italy for centuries, the fears and mistrust of the French would not have so much justification. But in fairness I should add that a business woman, who travels in neighbouring countries a great deal, said to me the other day: “I wouldn’t want to live in Scandinavia. Nor Holland nor Switzerland. It is not just sour grapes; but after all that we have been through, and the tension of our private lives for so many years, the complacency of their way of life would bore me to death, not to speak of the provincialism.”

I like to think that she is not alone in thinking this, however cynically it was expressed. I hope she is not.

A Journey to the Fezzan

by D. W. SNOW

Unless one is engaged in local trade or administration there are few reasons for penetrating 400 miles into the Sahara to visit the Fezzan. Mr Snow's reason was unusual: to study the migration, as yet little investigated, of European birds southwards over the desert towards tropical Africa

NEARLY forty per cent of the species of small birds which nest in Europe, and many of the larger ones also, spend the winter in Africa south of the Sahara. The times when they leave in autumn, and their progress south as far as the Mediterranean, are now fairly well known, but their subsequent passage over the Mediterranean and across the Sahara Desert has been relatively little investigated. We know that different species migrate in different ways: many, such as the swallows and martins and many warblers, move on a broad front and appear to cross the Mediterranean at all longitudes; others follow surprisingly narrow routes. Thus storks and many of the larger birds of prey concentrate at the Straits of Gibraltar in the west and the Bosphorus in the east. A few, such as the red-backed shrike, cross a wide stretch of sea but concentrate on one section of the Mediterranean only. Others cross on a wider front, but as their direction of flight from Europe is mainly south-west or south-east, not due south, they tend to cross at one end of the Mediterranean more than the other.

But, having reached the north coast of Africa, what do the migrants then do? Do they strike southwards over the desert, and so risk a journey of about 1500 miles without food or water, or do they somehow go in hops from oasis to oasis? How difficult and dangerous is the desert-crossing? Such questions cannot be completely answered. But it was clear that a journey into the Sahara in autumn would be of great interest. Not only would one be able to confirm or modify the known migration routes of many of the migrants, but one would get an idea of their behaviour, times of flight, and resting places, and might be able to see whether the desert was such a formidable 'barrier' for a small migrant as might be supposed.

It is well known that the Sahara Desert does not consist only of undulating billows of sand. The "sand seas" do indeed occupy thousands of square miles, but there are in addition vast expanses of rocky, stony or gravelly desert, high mountain ranges, and, in favoured places where water lies near to the surface, the oases.

Most oases are rather isolated from one another, but some are grouped in clusters, and there is in particular one cluster so large, so comparatively fertile and so strategically placed, that it has existed for hundreds of years as a country in its own right: the Fezzan.

Having decided to go to the Sahara to study the autumn migration of European birds south over the desert to their winter quarters in tropical Africa, I soon chose the Fezzan as the likeliest goal. Some of the oases of southern Algeria to the west are more accessible, but south of them there is only the bulge of West Africa, and it is known that fewer European migrants visit this part of the continent than the east and the south; while to the east of the Fezzan the great oasis of Kufra seemed likely to be a little better for birds but was certainly not so accessible, and the Egyptian oases presented political difficulties. So it was that, at the end of August last year, I set off with my friend Aubrey Manning for the Fezzan.

This group of oases lies across one of the main trans-Saharan caravan routes, from Lake Chad north to Tripoli. Slaves once marched north along this route to captivity in the Mediterranean basin, and some of the early European explorers of tropical West Africa, such as Horneman and Denham, and later Barth, penetrated to the interior by this way. The Sultan of Murzuch, the capital of the Fezzan, was then a tyrant to be placated before one could pass through his territory. On the abolition of the slave trade the Lake Chad-Tripoli route lost almost all its importance, and the Fezzan lost nearly all its wealth. The former is now a decayed desert road, disintegrating and partly obliterated by sand, and the latter is the poor and very much neglected desert province of the new independent kingdom of Libya.

From 1911 to 1945 Libya was an Italian colony. After World War II it came under United Nations administration, and in 1951 it attained independence. It is now entirely autonomous, but it has treaties with Britain and France under which these two countries

provide advisers to the Libyan authorities and are allowed to station troops in Libya, the two coastal provinces, Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, being allocated to Britain, and the desert province of the Fezzan to France.

Every few days, Arab merchants in the coastal towns of Libya, chiefly Tripoli and Misurata, send their lorries down into the Fezzan loaded with miscellaneous merchandise, sugar, tea, bedsteads, pots and pans. This, we had learnt, was the way to travel into the interior, if we did not want or could not afford to take the fortnightly French plane which keeps the handful of French doctors and political advisers in the Fezzan in contact with civilization. Three days after our arrival in Tripoli we heard that a lorry had just left for Sebha, the new capital of the Fezzan, but that it was stopping a day at Misurata before going south. We hired a car and caught up with it. Before long we were sitting in the cab of a huge Fiat diesel lorry, jolting southwards in company with another lorry along the coast road in the gathering dusk. After about forty miles we forked right away from the coast road, and almost immediately were in desert. By now it had been dark for some time and we stopped and slept until daylight.

The Italians turned the old caravan route to the Fezzan into a motor road when they occupied the country, and maintained it until the beginning of the last war, but for fifteen years now it has been allowed to decay. When we started next morning we almost at once had to leave the remains of the road, which was covered with sand, and take to the open desert. This turned out to be a usual proce-

dure and perhaps half of the five-day journey to Sebha was spent off the road itself. Many times we got bogged down in sand, and occasionally steep-sided dry wadi-beds had to be negotiated. Whenever a halt had to be made for more than two or three minutes, the passengers all got down from the top of the lorry, kindled little fires with the dry sticks of which they kept a store on top of the spare wheels, and made tea, which they drank very sweet out of small glasses, always offering us some. This tea-drinking, which they indulge in at the slightest excuse, is perhaps the chief of the minor pleasures of life for the Arabs in the desert and a focal activity in their social life.

In the middle of the second day we came to the small oasis of Bu Ngem, which consists of about 300 palms growing out of sand dunes, a few mud houses, and, 400 yards away, a dilapidated fort where we sheltered from the heat of the mid-day sun and ate a meal. We had time to walk over to the palms and look for birds, and had soon seen fifty migrants of at least eleven species, as well as numerous swallows and turtle-doves. Some trees had three or four birds sheltering in the leafy crown, perhaps an oriole, a shrike and one or two small warblers, while from the ground below we disturbed wheatears and wagtails. This was a very compact and isolated oasis; in the larger and more scattered oases further south we never found such a great concentration in such a small area. At 4 o'clock we left Bu Ngem, and before we had gone more than a few miles got so deeply involved in drifting sand that we had to stop for the night.





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The sea-front at Tripoli, Libya. Till 1945 an Italian colony, the country is now independent. Thousands of birds pass over it annually, on their migratory trips to Africa south of the Sahara

On the next day we drove for hours over undulating desert with low scarps of ochre-coloured hills constantly on the horizon. Whenever we surmounted or turned the flank of one ridge, another almost identical ridge appeared a few miles away. There was little vegetation or life of any sort. Once we came upon a gazelle, which allowed us to approach to within a few yards before it took fright. Birds were scarce, but occasionally we put up migrating turtle-doves from the shelter of rocks and stones along the route. In the afternoon we emerged onto an open undulating tract of desert composed of small reddish stones. On this we could make much better speed than on the corrugated surface of the road, but we had to drive on until midnight before we reached our stopping-place for the night, the oasis of Hun in the foothills of the Gebel es-Soda.

Next morning, in what appeared to be the main square of Hun, we had our first taste of the main scourge of the oases, the flies. They appeared in the half-light of dawn, buzzing about our faces and trying to settle on eyes and lips. Many of the native children, we noticed, are quite tolerant of them, and it is common to see babies and older children with

two or three flies crawling round the corners of their mouths and eyes. Eye diseases, and blindness, are common. Our journey this day took us over the Gebel es-Soda ("Black Mountains"), a desolate chain of purplish-black hills which rise to about 3000 feet and form the northern border of the Fezzan. Bumping up wide, scorched valleys, with only an occasional stunted acacia in the dry wadi-beds, we were amazed to see derelict forts perched up on the more conspicuous peaks. Such a statement by itself means little. One must see this lifeless black landscape, with its forts, to realize the economic importance of the slave trade and the lives that must have been expended in its maintenance.

Near the head of a long valley, far within the mountain chain, we suddenly came upon a well of fresh water where some Arabs were watering their herds of goats and camels, chanting rhythmically, pulling up their leather buckets by hand and emptying them into a long stone trough. Without excitement the animals came up in turn to drink, and a dark grey-brown desert lark, a form peculiar to these mountains, drank from the trickle that overflowed the trough. A flat-topped acacia gave shelter near by. Overhead a

buzzard circled. We stopped and all got down from the lorries. Everyone greeted everyone else—a handshake followed by bringing the right forefinger up to the mouth is the correct gesture in this country—and then we filled up the goat-skins which by now hung dry and shrunken from the sides of the lorries. Soon we were on the move again, but this unexpected scene of life in a lifeless landscape remains still vividly in our minds.

Late that afternoon we came down off the hills, and for miles, as it got dark and after, careered over a red stony desert like that of two days before. We stopped for the night and slept on it, and continued over it for some time next morning. Stretching out to the horizon on either side, it was like a gigantic hard tennis court, seventy miles long and perhaps no less broad. As we reached the end of it the desert became more undulating and patches of sand appeared which gradually coalesced to form dunes. We came down off a steep escarpment and stopped, confronted by a more formidable dune. Little figures emerged from what looked like caves in the escarpment behind us and came hurrying over the sand. They were the labour force maintained there by the Government to help the trading lorries over the "Dunes de Kneir". They proceeded to lay down metal tracks on the sand and we thus surmounted the dunes with little difficulty.

Though geographically the Gebel es-Soda forms the most natural northern boundary to the Fezzan, politically the Dunes de Kneir are nearer the boundary. A few miles further on we came to the frontier post, the isolated fort of Oum el Abid, where the two Libyan soldiers in charge laboriously copied out nonsensical extracts from our passports, and then offered us tea in the shade of the mud walls. That night we stopped only a few miles short of Sebha. The night was windier than usual and we slept in the shelter of a sandy hollow beside the road.

Sebha, the capital of the Fezzan, lies a kilometer from the southern edge of a great straggling oasis. It is dominated by the fort, a huge structure built by the Italians on

top of a steep hill and now occupied by the Foreign Legion. We had a letter of introduction to the French Consular Agent, who at once made us at home in the civilian mess attached to the fort; and so we said good-bye to our friends of the lorries and promised to send them photographs of themselves and their lorries when we got back to England.

The oasis of Sebha, in which we spent many days looking for birds, is typical of the oases of the Fezzan, but by no means one of the most attractive. When one has crossed the kilometer of soft sand that separates the fort from the edge of the oasis gardens, the line of palms, which in the distance looked so luxuriant, resolves itself into a sparse and rather deserty strip of cultivation. Each of the numerous small-holdings, into which it is

Tripoli's crowded streets. Arab traders' lorries set out periodically for the Fezzan in the far south, laden with hardware and groceries for the people of the oases

Keystone Pr



divided, is organized round its well. Much of the ground beneath the date-palms is lying fallow and reverts to sandy earth, while on the rest millet, tomatoes and some other crops are grown. The wells are worked morning and evening : up and down a steep ramp a man or boy drives a donkey, which, as it descends, pulls up a leather bucket full of water. When the bucket appears above ground, by a simple but ingenious device the water is spilled out into a trough and led away to irrigate the little square millet-plots. An old man or small boy is often seen directing the flow of water down the channels, leading it into a new square or damming up one that has received enough. Each of the plots under cultivation is flooded at least once a week. On these wells, which cannot have changed for hundreds of years, all human life depends. More than anything else, the squeaking of the wooden pulleys as the buckets come up, the splash of the water emptying out, and the braying of the donkeys are the characteristic sounds of the oases of the Fezzan.

Though Sebha is not outstanding for its gardens, its string of semi-permanent lakes, tucked away in the north-west corner about six miles from the fort, is unique of its kind. A walk of six miles each way, over soft sand and under a sun which had lost hardly any of its summer heat, was luckily not necessary, as the French kindly put an army vehicle and two legionaries at our disposal; we were thus able to pay four visits to the lakes. They lie in slight depressions at the edge of the oasis, where sand-dunes abut on it. In winter they may flood extensively, while in summer they partly dry up. When we were there they were largely dry, and surrounded by expanses of white salt-encrusted mud in which grew thickets of tamarisks and tufts of coarse spiny grass. In places dense palm-groves come down to the water's edge. These groves offered welcome shade, and bunches of dates larger and juicier than any others we saw hung in profusion within reach of one's hand. Only the intense heat and the ubiquitous flies marred our enjoyment of the scene. It was, as would be expected, an interesting place for birds, though they were not very abundant. In addition to the herons, waders, ducks and other water-birds, the bushes surrounding the water were the home of parties of bush-babblers, long-tailed, gregarious thrush-like birds which make a variety of loud whistles and trills and fly from bush to bush with a weak fluttering flight, one close behind another in follow-my-leader fashion. A familiar but unexpected sound from the tamarisk-

covered swamps was the explosive cry of moorhens, which are resident on these lakes.

In the next month we were able to visit three other oases, all within 100 miles of Sebha : Murzuch, the old capital in the days of the slave trade, Traghen and Brach. At both Murzuch and Brach a handful of Frenchmen live in the Italian forts on the edge of the oasis; at Traghen there are now no Europeans and we stayed in a green mud fort, one of the very old buildings of the Fezzan, dating from a time when Traghen, in its turn, was the capital. Murzuch has poor infertile gardens, but the old parts of the town, though decayed, are still impressive, and the covered market was the only one of its kind that we saw in the desert. Traghen and Brach both boast irrigation schemes pioneered by the Italians during their occupation. Water welling up to the surface has been used to irrigate many acres of millet-fields beyond the edge of the oasis proper, in what was once barren desert. The "palmery" at Brach is in addition the most beautiful in the Fezzan, with high luxuriant groves, clear streams of water flowing beneath, and its decorated mosque set in the middle. It is unfortunate for the visitor that the capital and centre of communications has now been fixed at Sebha, which apart from its rather inaccessible lakes has little to distinguish it except for the size of its fort.

By far the pleasantest time to be out looking for birds, or doing anything else, was the early morning. We used to go out at dawn or soon after, and continue observations until about mid-day, by which time the heat had become oppressive. After mid-day dinner, which was substantial, all human life died down until about 5 p.m., when we again went out and stayed out until dusk. Unluckily the early morning was not the best time for the birds themselves. We found that migrants began to appear from about 9 a.m. onwards, that they continued to come down throughout the day and reached their peak of abundance in the evening; by next morning most had moved on. Those that were left behind were the few individuals that were making a longer halt.

It was interesting to find that the migrants tended to choose those parts of the oases that were most like their normal habitats. Thus spotted flycatchers and redstarts were usually seen in open parts of the oases with well-spaced trees, tree-pipits in places where there was a thick ground vegetation, such as millet or vegetables, beneath the palms, and wheat-eaters in the dry stony or sandy spaces between the oasis gardens, or on the fallow parts. The



All remaining photographs by the

The lorry that carried the author had to cross the high Gebel es-Soda, near the Fezzan's northern border. (Above) Stopping at the head of a valley to replenish water supplies. (Below) The Dunes de Kneir: a government labour force, living in caves below the escarpment, lays metal tracks for passing lorries





Kodachrome

(Above) At Sebha, capital of the Fezzan, the enormous fortress built by the Italians looks down on the Tunis plane, which is about to take French officials home on leave. (Below) The all-important wells: a boy drives the donkey up and down a ramp, and the water thus raised runs away to irrigate millet-plots





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(Above) The decorated mosque in the "palmery" at Brach—the most beautiful palm-garden in the Fezzan.
 (Below) Looking down an irrigation channel at Brach towards the millet-fields in what was desert before the Italians undertook irrigation works. The ground on each side of the channels is white with salt

Kodachrome





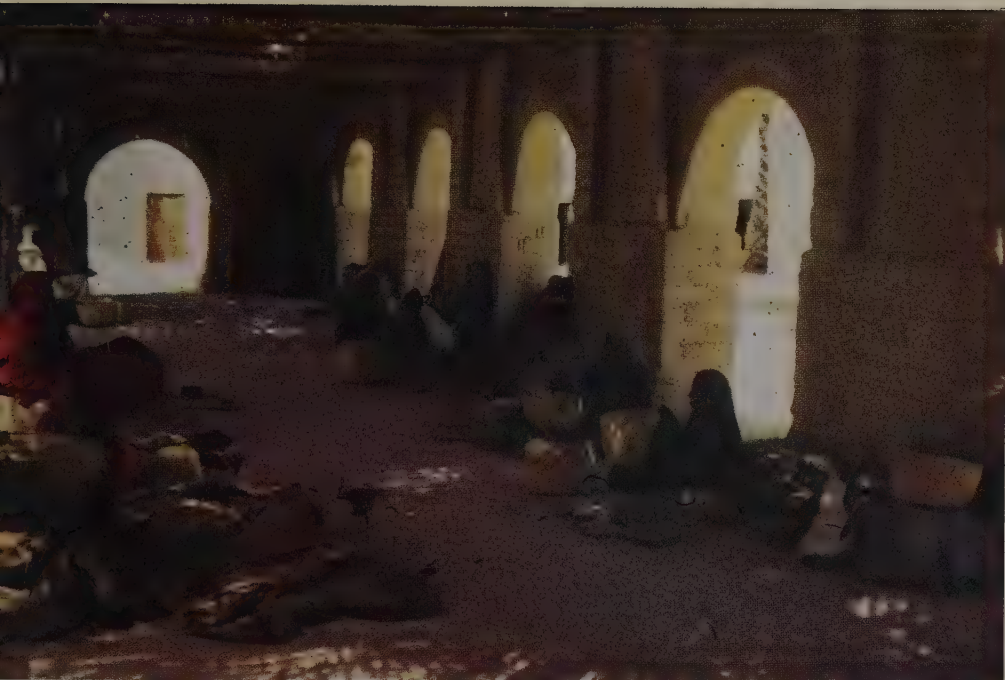
Kodachrome



Kodachrome

(Above) The date harvest at Brach. A boy climbs up the palms and shakes down the fruit, or cuts off the clusters, while the women and children who are waiting below gather them in baskets. Most of the dates are later buried under the sand and thus stored for winter use.

(Left) A luxuriant stand of date-palms in the oasis of Brach. Ripe bunches of golden dates can be seen hanging beneath the fronds. Migrant warblers like to shelter at the base of the fronds and pick insects off the fruit.



Kodachrome

The covered market at Murzuch, formerly capital of the Fezzan. The women come in with baskets of vegetable produce from the gardens surrounding the town, and sit down beside them all day long. They do not seem to sell very much, but they enjoy the company and gossip of their neighbours and welcome the shelter from the formidable heat and glare of the sun in the depths of the Sahara

single bittern that we saw flew out of the top of a palm, which with its stiff vertical fronds was evidently the nearest approach to a reed-bed that the oasis could offer.

In the course of our stay, the species that were passing through gradually changed. At first, in early September, shrikes, golden orioles, hoopoes and turtle-doves had been among the chief species. By the end of our stay, in mid-October, these had gone, and willow-warblers, white wagtails and tree-pipits had appeared. Some, such as swallows and redstarts, were with us the whole time. We never saw any birds that were obviously tired, and in the end came to the conclusion that with settled weather, such as we had, the desert crossing is not so formidable for small birds as we had supposed. A sudden sand storm may be disastrous and bring thousands of migrants down in an exhausted state, thus showing—what might otherwise be difficult to believe—that vast numbers are continually flying over unseen. In autumn they may be helped considerably by the winds, which over

the whole Sahara blow constantly from a northerly direction except near the surface of the ground, but as yet we have little exact idea at what height birds do in fact fly when migrating.

After watching the migrants on their way south over the desert, when our time came to leave we flew north. A Tunis air company sends a plane twice a month to Sebha, to bring back French officials on leave, and we were lucky to find that its visit was due two days before our ship was to sail from Tunis. On October 13, when we left, the days were almost as hot as ever but the nights had become cool. That evening at Tunis it was grey and cloudy and there was a fine drizzle. Autumn had come, and with it an influx of migrant robins from across the Mediterranean. The country had a greener look than when we were there six weeks earlier. Sebha, a thousand miles to the south, had been lucky to get some rain eight months before and might not be so lucky again in the coming winter.

Andalusian Pilgrimage: The Romería del Rocío

by MICHAEL SWAN

IF you were brought blindfold to the village of El Rocío and your eyes freed as you stood on the roof of its church you would see little in the view to suggest that the village was not like many others in southern Andalusia, with its terraces of white-washed houses glaring almost painfully in the sun and roofed with terracotta pantiles. But soon you would realize that here the houses straggle formlessly over a wide area rather than huddling together in the sociable fashion of Andalusia. And then you would remember that in all the other villages of this area the iron balconies are alight with brilliant flowers, while here no flower is to be seen on any balcony; then you would notice that the two open spaces of the village are not the usual neat plazas, but large areas of grass-flecked sand—and from here your eye would wander beyond the village to the great flat expanses that stretch for mile upon mile to the distant horizon and form a bush-strewn desert.

Indeed, El Rocío is no ordinary village; it is a village for an occasion, and throughout the year, except for three days, the streets are silent, the houses are empty and the only inhabitant is a young priest called Don Carlito, who spends the year in reading and meditation. He has a stock reply for those who ask him if he is ever lonely: "I am never alone," he says, "I always have Nuestra Señora del Rocío to keep me company." Don Carlito is the guardian of this ancient and miraculous image which is the whole cause and being of El Rocío. One day, early in the 17th century, a shepherd was walking with his dog among the trees of what is now El Rocío, trees that had formed a small, uninhabited oasis in this desert. The dog began to bark excitedly and his master found him worrying at some object in the hollow of a tree, which, when he went closer, he found to be a painted, wooden image of the Virgin Mary, some four feet high and dressed in a linen gown which had partly rotted away from exposure to the weather. The shepherd set out for the village of Almonte, ten miles to the

north, taking the image with him; at one point he lay down to rest and awoke to find the image had gone. He returned to the oasis and found the Virgin once more in the hollow of the tree as he had first seen Her. He returned alone to Almonte with his story and the next day a party of villagers made the first pilgrimage to the shrine. They named the image Nuestra Señora del Rocío, or "Our Lady of the Dew", because Her gown had been rotted by the diurnal action of the dew. The people of Almonte were certain that the image had a supernatural origin, but there was in fact a rational explanation for its being hidden in a tree. Many images were hidden away to evade the iconoclastic persecutions of the Moorish conquerors of Spain; often the hiding places would be forgotten and only stumbled upon years later. The people of Almonte decided to make an annual pentecostal pilgrimage to the oasis, dressed the Virgin in the magnificent pale silver gown She wears today and built Her a shrine. In 1649 Almonte was stricken with the plague and the Virgin was brought across the desert for a holiday in the village—whereupon the disease dwindled away. The fame of the miracles spread and other villages of the district formed brotherhoods, or *cofradías*, to make the pilgrimage across the desert to El Rocío. The pilgrims would not spend the days at the shrine in unmixed worship, for the pilgrimage was a "*Romería*", a peculiarly Andalusian tradition of a "religious picnic". The pilgrims travelled by horse and by covered ox-wagon and they divided their time at the shrine more or less equally between dancing and drinking round the campfires and moving in solemn, candle-lit procession to worship the image of the Virgin.

Down the years the fame of the Romería del Rocío has grown in south-western Andalusia; today, on the Thursday before Pentecost, *cofradías* from thirty-four towns and villages set out for El Rocío. They come from Jerez de la Frontera and Sanlúcar in the south, travelling the most difficult route



ndachrome

All photographs by Hugh G

The cofradía (brotherhood) of San Salvador gathers in the Plaza San Salvador, Seville, for a ceremony of blessing before starting on the three-day journey to El Rocío, in the desert west of the Guadalquivir



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(Above) The poor *cofradía* of Triana, gipsy quarter of Seville, sets out for El Rocío. One of the earliest to be formed, it has a haughty attitude to San Salvador. (Below) A poor section of the Huelva *cofradía* arrives at El Rocío and prepares to camp in the eucalyptus copse marking the oasis

Kodachrome



across thirty miles of the marshland that forms the estuary of the Guadalquivir, sanctuary for ibis, flamingos and a hundred kinds of birds, and for wild camels that roam in an embarrassment of water. Cofradías set out, too, along the easier routes from Huelva and La Palma to the north-west, or Seville, some thirty-five miles to the north-east.

Early in the morning of the Thursday before Pentecost we stood in the Plaza of San Salvador, in Seville, and watched the cofradía of San Salvador preparing to leave for El Rocío. Fifteen covered wagons lined one side of the plaza, all hung with bright festoons of paper flowers, white lace curtains at front and back drawn aside to form a series of miniature stages on which sat girls in the pure and violent colours of flamenca dress, their full skirts splayed out around them, castanets at play and singing the traditional songs of the Romería. Each wagon bore an oval card on its side with the words "*Viva la Blanca Paloma*" (Long Live the White Dove). The white dove, standing for Virgin purity, is the symbol of the Romería, and wherever we went pilgrims were greeting each other with cries of "*Viva la Blanca Paloma!*" Soon a dignitary of the church arrived in his splendid vestments to bless the pilgrims and speed them on their way; in his presence a small banner of red velvet and gold was brought ceremoniously from the church and placed on an ornate baldachin which stood ready to be drawn by a decorated ox. As the banner was secured beneath the baldachin the thousands now gathered in the plaza dropped to their knees and the priest spoke in celebration of

the purity of the Virgin. The banner, we were told, was called the "*Sin Pecado*" (Without Sin) and all the thirty-four cofradías who were that morning preparing to set out for El Rocío would be carrying their *Sin Pecado* with them, some beneath a simple canopy of cloth, others, from rich towns, with a magnificence greater even than that of the pilgrims of San Salvador.

A blast of trumpets echoed through the plaza to be followed by the reverberating cries of "*Viva la Blanca Paloma, viva, viva, viva!*" and then a little man bearing a drum and a rustic flute took up position in front of the lines of horsemen in their cutaway jackets and flat-crowned Cordoban hats. The Pollo, or Chicken, as the little man is called, began to play the strange, insistent rhythm that he was to play unceasingly for the next few days, a rhythm that seemed to have its primaevial origin in the distant sierras. With the Pollo at the head the procession began its progress through the narrow streets of the town, across the bridge of Triana and along the Huelva road towards the *hacienda* where the pilgrims were to be entertained for the night. The oxen set the pace and these beautiful lumbering beasts took the wagons no more than fifteen miles that day.

Late that night we arrived at the hacienda Benajiar where the pilgrims had camped; their wagons formed a semicircle and some of the girls were dancing *sevillanas* round a camp-fire—tired, it seemed, of the official entertainment. This took place round the large bathing pool which the owner had built in the garden of the hacienda: a setting so



A. J. Thornton



(Above) A *cofradía*, with its "Sin Pecado" (Without Sin) in front, is greeted on arrival at El Rocío.
 (Below) Outriders with a Sin Pecado move across the sand to find their camping ground. All food is brought with them and fodder for nearly a thousand horses must be arranged, though water is adequate





On arrival each cofradía makes obeisance before the shrine of Our Lady of the Dew. Here the Sin Pecado is turned to face the image

new and smart, so cunningly lit with concealed lights, that we might well have been in Hollywood. The occasion was one of the few democratic occasions of the Sevillian year, a mingling of the nobility of Seville and the common-or-garden pilgrims; and as the night went by more and more of the pilgrims retired to dance among themselves round the camp-fire, until the garden was left for the nobility alone.

At five next morning the horses were saddled, the oxen yoked to the wagons and the pilgrims were on their way again, traveling along rough tracks that, by the morning of the third day, bring them to the desert. The oxen strain in the too-yielding sand and girls and horsemen must heave the wagons from their ruts. All around there is nothing to be seen save the ridges of miniature pine trees and the bushes of sage and rosemary, with now and then wild irises, the only relief to the desolate scene.

We arrived in El Rocío early that day after a three-hour drive across the ten miles of desert from Almonte; a way had been worn through the bushes but most of the ground was fluid sand. We spent the afternoon on the roof of the church where the look-out man stood scanning the horizon in all directions and two small boys were ready to peal the bells at his command. Towards four o'clock he pointed south and we could just make out a thin white streak on the horizon that barely seemed to move. "It is Sanlúcar!" he cried, "always they are first," and he fired three rockets in welcome and the bells pealed furiously. Ten minutes later, to the north, another, smaller caravan came into sight and during the next hour five more began their slow progress across the last lap of desert. It was more than an hour and a half after we had first sighted the caravan from Sanlúcar that it entered the village between the two copses of eucalyptus trees and the air filled with a mist of sand and welcoming cries of "*Viva la Blanca Paloma!*" Early comers came out of the houses with *copitas* of wine and handed them up to the horsemen, the girls in the wagons sang a song that ended "*Olé olé olé olé olé, La Virgen del Rocío.*" And then the procession moved on to pass the shrine of the Virgin in an act of obeisance; the horsemen doffed their hats and bowed, while the baldachin with the Sin Pecado was turned to face the altar in homage.

Shortly before nightfall all the *cofradías* have arrived and made obeisance; some have been small, with poorly decorated wagons, the outriders on weak-looking horses, others—

such as the *cofradía* of Huelva—a magnificent array of wagons, horses and beautiful girls. Now the village is filled with some twenty-five thousand people and over a thousand horses whose hoofs are spreading the pale mist of sand lit by the sunset. Women in flamenca dress ride pillion behind their men and form delicate silhouettes, camp-fires for the evening meal glimmer through the mist from the eucalyptus copse where the gipsies have camped; and then, when at last the horses have been put to their corral, the mist settles and the nearly full moon transforms the village. The revelry now begins seriously. The headquarters of each *cofradía* is an open house for wine, song and gallantry; there is an Andalusian saying which goes: "She wouldn't even get a husband at the *Romería del Rocío.*" On the first night I fell in with two young men and their girl friends who had just finished taking part in a candlelight procession through the village to the shrine. One of the young men had a bottle of brandy under his jacket which he passed from mouth to mouth as we wandered through the village; then suddenly he would put the bottle on the ground and begin to clap the rhythm for dancing, others would join us and soon ten couples were dancing *seguidillas*; it was one of a hundred similar groups. Finally our wanderings returned us to the shrine and in a moment all levity had gone from my companions. Reverently we entered the nave, faintly lit with pin-points of a hundred candles banking the altar. A group stood before the Virgin, women crying, an old man at full length on the ground moving slowly backwards in fulfilment of a vow, and a young man, with his face lit like a Zurbarán mystic, hysterically crying his praises of the Virgin. My companions knelt in prayer, the young man with the bottle concealing it as well as he could beneath his jacket; then suddenly all stood to their feet and we left by a side door. The bottle-carrier crouched down and brought out the bottle, and we all did likewise to form a close circle to receive our swig—until, suddenly, one of the girls jumped to her feet with a cry of horror and said "Don't drink—not here—we're in a direct line from the Virgin," and we all scattered to a less sacrilegious position.

Still later that night I found myself, with my companion, at a party given by the *cofradía* of Huelva. We were strangers in this bare room that seemed ready to burst with all the possible sounds of gaiety. We were, we soon realized, strangers to be initiated: our glasses were continually brimming with strong



(Above) The headquarters of the *cofradías* vary according to the wealth of the community and are used for dancing, drinking and general celebration. This is the *caseta* of the wealthy mining town of Huelva, with members gathering outside to take part in a cavalcade in homage to the Virgin of El Rocío. The staffs bear the insignia of the brotherhood. (Right) Many of the children at the *romería* are dressed as miniature versions of their parents: boys with "Cordoba" hats and cutaway jackets





(Above) Many families who are not members of cofradías club together to hire a lorry. Such scenes as this take place at all times of day and night. (Below) Two dignitaries of the cofradía of Huelva sing flamenco against the wall of their caseta. The drink of the romería is manzanilla





(Above) Almonte has the right to carry the Virgin in procession on the last day. All who try to touch Her are beaten off by the brothers of Almonte, but here the baldachin has been pulled over by the attackers. (Below) A group of attackers assist a companion who has been hurt in the fray



manzanilla, and when we were asked if we would partner two of the girls in a sevillana we were given no opportunity to refuse, could do no more than delight the company with our feats of gracelessness. "*Hombre-e-s!*" called a deep voice from a big, red-faced man dressed in a draped sheet who approached us at the end of the dance. He told us to kneel opposite each other on the floor, put our heads together and our noses on the floor. And while we stayed in this position he gabbled through some mumbo-jumbo prayers and blessings; then came the deluge of liquid—a whole bottle of white wine was emptied on our heads; a cry of delight went up—"Viva la Blanca Paloma!" We smiled through our discomfort and a moment later the room was a swirl of skirts and the dancing, laughter and flirting continued for two hours more, before someone suggested we moved on to another *cofradía* where a woman with a magnificent voice would be singing *cante hondo*.

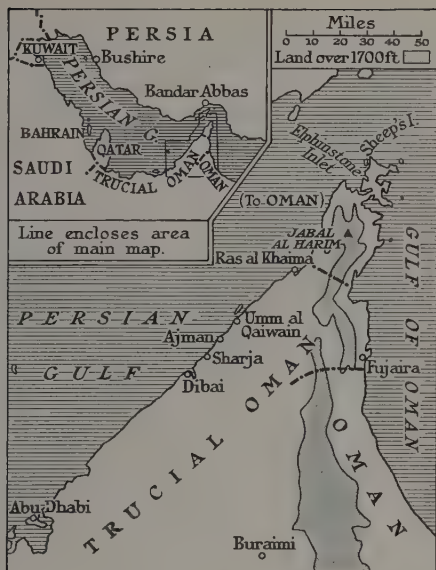
At last, towards dawn, the party ended and we went to our camp-beds beneath the eucalyptus trees, to be woken so soon by the strong morning sun, the songs of the nearby gipsies and the music, once more, of the drum and flute. A thousand more pilgrims arrived that morning, mostly horsemen with girls riding pillion, and throughout the day the horsemen and their girls trotted and galloped on their social round till, for an hour or two, the siesta brought a comparative quiet to the village and once more the sand began to settle.

At midnight the *Romería* made another of its strange, moving oscillations from revelry to religion. At one minute the butter-pat sound of the rhythm for the dance was everywhere, groups dotted the village moving in the simple formations for the fandango; and then all music had stopped and the pilgrims were quietly gathered before the *casetas* of their *cofradías*, holding wooden staffs and preparing to move in a vast procession through the village to pay homage to the Virgin and sing the hymn "*O Madre mia, Reina del cielo, Madre del Salvador.*" When, after many hours, each pilgrim had made the grand obeisance to the Virgin the paling sky was cut with fireworks, the drums beat out their rhythm and voices with rough, oriental modulations filled the night with the fandango from Huelva. Our hosts and initiators of the night before invited us to their caseta, where we found all who had been laughing, dancing and flirting the night before sitting quiet and pensive—waiting to make the move

from a state of reverence to a state of fiesta. Manzanilla and the card of the party began their work and dancing went on till dawn, when we left to snatch two hours' sleep before the Virgin began Her triumphal procession through the village.

Not all the processions of the images in Holy Week at Seville, Málaga or Granada have a sight to equal the progress of Nuestra Señora del Rocío as She is borne on a throne beneath a golden baldachin which rests on the straining shoulders of pilgrims from Almonte. It is the privilege of Almonte, the first of the *cofradías*, to carry the throne and the people of Almonte protect their privilege so jealously that they will allow no-one from another *cofradía* to touch even the hem of the Virgin's gown. For well over an hour we watched, safely from a balcony, the scene of battle as the baldachin moved at a snail's pace through the village; two hundred men were fighting with each other to approach the throne and those in the front ranks pressed their bodies against the bearers and strained their fingers to reach the Virgin, while the bearers lunged out with their fists and their feet and received blood-drawing punches in return. Suddenly one of the attackers, a tall powerful man with blood flowing freely from a cut below his eye, reached over far enough for his hand to grip one of the posts of the baldachin. He pulled with all his weight and the whole baldachin lurched over to one side till it seemed that the Virgin must topple into the fighting mass—but with fierce, warlike cries the pilgrims of Almonte fought back and returned the Virgin to Her equilibrium.

The morning passed; the Virgin was back in Her place above the now guttering bank of candles, from whose bases rivulets of wax had run to pattern the tiled steps. The last ecstatic praises were cried aloud while, outside, oxen were decorated with their gold-embroidered head-dresses and yoked to the covered wagons, horsemen were making their final rounds of farewell, drinking their interminable stirrups of manzanilla to toast the Blanca Paloma. The last sevillanas and seguidillas were sung and danced and the Pollos were preparing to lead their caravans back across the desert to the rhythm of drum and flute. By nightfall the village would be empty save for the few score who would clean the streets and pack the empty bottles into the trucks. And then, within three days, El Rocío would be returned to Don Carlito—empty, silent, the great pattern of horse-hoofs on the sand gently dissolving in the breeze.



A. J. Thornton

FROM time to time in recent months, at rather shortening intervals, there has been mention in the press of an oasis called Buraimi in south-eastern Arabia. This oasis lies partly in the British-protected Sheikdom of Abu Dhabi, partly in the independent Sultanate of Muscat and Oman. It is, at present at all events, of little value, producing nothing but a few dates; nevertheless, it was entered in 1952 by an emissary of Saudi Arabia with the avowed object of applying pressure on the inhabitants to declare their allegiance to King Saud, who now claims it as his. This pretension created a troubled situation in which Her Majesty's Government uphold the cause of Abu Dhabi and, by request, that of the Sultan of Muscat, against Saudi Arabia. Clearly, no need for *Lebensraum* provoked the intrusion of the ruler of that vast and sparsely peopled country of nearly one million square miles into this insignificant Naboth's vineyard. It is the expectation that under its scanty soil there may lurk oil, a commodity which has already brought great wealth to Saudi Arabia. Not uninterested in the outcome is the Arabian-American Oil Company, sole concessionnaire for Saudi Arabian oil.

Abu Dhabi, the State of the delightful name mainly affected by the dispute, is the largest of the seven Treaty Sheikdoms composing what is called Trucial Oman, a region I visited in April of this year as the guest of

A Visit to Trucial Oman

by SIR HARRY LUKE,
K.C.M.G., D.Litt.

Remote as is the country described by the author, it has recently found its way into our newspapers. The dispute to which he refers may have been settled by the time this article is published; but, as he shows, the region was long a troubled one and this is by no means the first time that British responsibility for maintaining peace there has been acknowledged and put into effect. Sir Harry Luke's official service in the Near and Middle East extended over many years, including six in Palestine

H.M. Political Agent, my godson Christopher Pirie-Gordon. This Arabian Heptarchy has been under British protection since 1820, before which it was known, with good reason, not as the Trucial but the Pirate Coast. The other chiefdoms are Dibai, Sharja, Ras al Khaima, Fujaira and the smaller Ajman and Umm al Qaiwain. Only the last two (whose Rulers get a salute of three guns to the others' five) lie wholly on the Persian Gulf side of the Oman Peninsula; only Fujaira wholly on the side of the Gulf of Oman. The others extend from coast to coast, separating the northern tip of Oman, which is a part of Muscat territory, from the rest of that Sultanate. Fujaira is interesting mainly by reason of the present Ruler's father and predecessor, who died in 1935 at the age of 104 after a lively and occasionally interrupted reign of 85 years.

The Political Agent in Trucial Oman, and his colleagues of Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait, are subordinate to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf. H.E. the Resident himself, formerly an officer of the Government of India stationed at the Persian port of Bushire, is now a Foreign Service official with headquarters in the Arab State of Bahrain, which also stands in treaty relationship to Great Britain.

Mr Gladstone, that rigid economist, remarked at one of Queen Victoria's receptions that he hated waste but could appreciate splendour. A yet more pronounced lover of

splendour as displayed to the advantage of the state was Lord Curzon, in whose wide Imperial vision the importance of ceremonial in national and international affairs was such that it coloured his regime in India and inspired in part his progress in 1903 to Muscat and Trucial Oman. This was the first such visit undertaken by an Indian Viceroy and it was made, very properly, in the grand manner under escort of the entire East Indies squadron of the Royal Navy. On November 21, Curzon met the Trucial Rulers in durbar at Sharja and pronounced a notable and characteristic Address, from which I quote the following extracts :

Chiefs . . . Your fathers and grandfathers before you have doubtless told you of the history of the past. You know that a hundred years ago there were constant trouble and fighting in the Gulf; almost every man was a marauder or a pirate; kidnapping and slave-trading flourished; fighting and bloodshed went on without stint or respite; no ship could put out to sea without fear of attack; the pearl fishery was a scene of annual conflict; and security of trade or peace there was none. Then it was that the British Government intervened and said that in the interests of its own subjects and traders, and of its legitimate influence in the seas that wash the Indian coasts, this state of affairs must not

continue . . .

In 1820 the first General Treaty was signed between the British Government and the Chiefs; and of these or similar agreements there have been in all no fewer than eight. In 1839 the Maritime Truce was concluded, and was renewed from time to time until the year 1853, when it was succeeded by the Treaty of Perpetual Peace that has lasted ever since. Under that Treaty it was provided that there should be a complete cessation of hostilities at sea between the subjects of the signatory Chiefs, and a "perfect maritime truce"—to use the words that were employed—"for evermore". . .

I have selected these passages because they summarize so clearly the events that changed the habits of the region from piracy to peace. Those wishing to study the story in greater detail must turn to the *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia* by J. G. Lorimer, a work of quite remarkable erudition and comprehensiveness, published by the India Office.

Trucial Oman is best reached by air through Sharja, which is a R.A.F. Station as well as a commercial airport. The Ruler, Sheikh Saqr IV of the Qasimi dynasty, is a short, dapper, alert young man of thirty with a neatly trimmed beard, belonging, like his six fellow-Rulers, to the Sunni branch of

The author with the Sheikh of Sharja, his bodyguard and the Arab Assistant to the Political Agent

From the author





Lieut-Col. Sir Rupert Hay

Dhows in Dibai creek. Wind-towers above the houses are designed to catch the breeze in hot weather

Islam. His chieftdom derives a certain importance—and revenue—from the presence of the airport and base; his palace, although of the usual coral blocks and dried mud, is not without architectural embellishment; in it he shows films to his household; he indulges in colour-photography. He was a pleasant host at the Arab meals with which, not only here but in the other Sheikhdoms I visited, my stay in Trucial Oman was heavily punctuated.

During my own official service in the Near and Middle East it was an ever-present pre-occupation to me when attending Oriental feasts that I might be required to swallow a sheep's eye or similar honourable but unappetizing titbit *ad maiorem regis gloriam*. No such anxiety marred the Political Agent's enjoyment of the *ghaddas* and the *ghusis*—the full-dress Arab banquets and the lesser collations—at which I saw him in action in four of his seven Trucial Sheikhdoms.

There before us, as we squatted on the carpeted floors of the Rulers' reception-rooms, would be ranged in steaming array bowl after bowl of rice dappled with purple raisins, streaked with brilliantly orange-coloured threads of aromatic saffron. Flanking these were other bowls containing chunks of boiled mutton and goat interspersed with the livers and lights and great solid lumps of the fat of the sheep's tails. Topping these pyramids of flesh in somewhat macabre eminence

lay the animals' heads. There were no eating utensils.

With a sort of dumb fascination I would observe my godson wrench the tongue from the head nearest him with the purposefulness of a mediaeval torturer, then devour it, skin and all, with every manifestation of relish. With even greater determination would he then gouge the rather less accessible eyes out of the recesses of the skull and, before swallowing, savour them as might an oyster-fancier roll in his mouth some particularly succulent blue-point.

His virtuosity in this respect was, I fancy, not without its rewards, official and otherwise. For one thing, it showed his hosts that he placed more than a purely formal value upon the *bonnes bouches* provided for his honourable delectation, a form of culinary compliment which with most Westerners achieves at best no more than a *succès d'estime*. Secondly, it tended to divert the attention of those who would otherwise press him to distension with dollops of a more filling kind. I have heard no Arabic equivalent of the Turkish guest's terse but telling plea for mercy when his host continues to stuff him after he can swallow no more, "*Yemek sizin, qarn bizim*", he will then gasp in his extremity: "the food may be yours, but the belly is mine."

The Political Agent lives fifteen miles southwest of Sharja, in the Sheikhdom of Dibai.



The author



(Above) *The palace of the Ruler of Abu Dhabi is so large as to suggest an Arabian Kremlin. The three predecessors of the present Ruler, Sheikh Shakhbut, met with sudden and mysterious deaths within the space of six years.* (Left) *When Sheikh Shakhbut came aboard H.M.S. Wild Goose to call on the Senior Naval Officer and the British Political Agent, he was accompanied by his coffee-maker, an elderly, swarthy man of forbidding aspect, here seen with Mr Pirie-Gordon, the Political Agent. The fatalities mentioned above may not be without their relevance to the measure of apprehension with which this personage is regarded in certain circles of Abu Dhabi*

Joint capital of this State are the twin towns of Dibai and Daira, one of them on each side of the entrance to a creek extending several miles inland. Passing between the two towns in your *abra*, a coracle of ancient type which is to the creek what the gondola is to Venice and the *dghajsa* to the Grand Harbour of Malta, is not altogether unlike passing along a much wider Grand Canal but for the essentially local feature of the wind-towers, square stone shafts of attractive Persian design that funnel what breeze there may be into the houses in the hot weather. The population of the two towns is a mixture of Sunni and Shiah Arabs, Persians, Baluchis, Pakistanis and Indians, and the *sugs* (bazaars) are well stocked with the cheaper types of Persian and Indian goods. And what, it will be asked, does Dibai send out in return?

A kindly reviewer of my autobiography *Cities and Men* likened me in my passion for travel to "an energetic bloodhound determined not to miss any worth-while smells." Here, in the creek of Dibai, I certainly found the most potent smell of a lifelong quest. Dibai's contribution to world economy is a fish manure which outreeks even the guano islands of Peru in midsummer; and that, as I can assert from experience, is saying much. Every time I arrived at Daira from Sharja to cross the creek to the Residency, I had to face the worst stink-barrage I have ever known.

One morning we travelled by Land-Rover seventy-five miles across the desert from Dibai to Ras al Khaima. There my host had rendezvous with Captain Webb, the Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf (colloquially known as "Snopgee"), who was paying some of his periodical courtesy calls on the Trucial Rulers. After a particularly ample ghadda with His Presence Sheikh Saqr II of Ras al Khaima, the Political Agent and I joined Captain Webb in his flagship, H.M.S. *Wild Goose*, for the next three days of her cruise. The country between Dibai and Ras al Khaima had been completely flat; but there now began to loom before us the grim mountains of Muscat.

We steamed almost due north to the very tip of Oman Peninsula along this forbidding range, bare of the slightest trace of vegetation and culminating here, at a height varying in the maps from 6750 to 8200 feet, in the peak of Jabal al Harim. Presently we passed the entrance to Elphinstone Inlet, a fjord which eats its tortuous course between the mountains almost to the other side of the peninsula and is reputed to be in summer the

hottest place on earth. I can well believe it, for no breeze can fan its inner reaches, imprisoned between sheer walls of baking rock. We anchored for that night and the following day in the channel of Khor al Qaiwai between tiny Sheep's Island and the land's end of Oman. Opposite us across the Strait of Hormuz, some sixty miles to the north, lay the Persian port of Bandar Abbas.

The object of the visit to Sheep's Island was to make a routine inspection of the British Naval Base established on it for convoy control in 1942. The base (H.M.S. *Hormuz* to the Navy) was built with the permission of the Sultan of Muscat, in whose territory it lies; is not now used; but is kept in repair.

On leaving Sheep's Island we steamed through the night to Abu Dhabi, to visit the Ruler, Sheikh Shakhbut, who came off in an impressive dhow to pay his call on the Senior Naval Officer.

The Political Agent and I returned by land from Abu Dhabi to Dibai on the Saturday before Easter, and on the Sunday attended a simple service in the R.A.F. church-room at Sharja, taken by the only minister of religion in the place. He was a Presbyterian from Pennsylvania attached to a United States medical mission engaged in unobtrusive but valuable maternity and welfare work among the Arab women. The service concluded with prayers for:

"the ruler of this land, Sheikh Saqr (and may he be led one day to find the truth); the Queen of England; and the Honourable Mr Eisenhower, President of the United States of America",

a combination to be heard nowhere else in the world.

Trucial Oman is a poor land, and the British Government have recently made it a grant of £25,000 for such things as a hospital, a school, drilling for water and irrigation, and the surveying of harbours. But if the day comes—as it may come at any time—when the prospectors strike oil within its limits, they will effect a change in its economy that will bypass centuries in the twinkling of an eye. This is what has happened in Bahrain and even more drastically in that State of fabulous overnight wealth, Kuwait. But, until it happens in Trucial Oman, its Chiefs will continue to exercise their patriarchal rule over what has hitherto remained a primitive corner of the Moslem world, a region where camels still outnumber cars and the call of the muezzin is not yet drowned in the raucous blare of the radio.

Benin: "City of Blood"—and Bronze

by IAN BRINKWORTH, M.B.E.

The clash of cultures in Africa has involved both gains and losses. Against the disappearance of human sacrifice may be set the decline of the art herein described, of which the best examples are incomparable. To preserve these, and to record for posterity the institutions in which the art originated, is a debt that the Government of Nigeria and the author are concerned to honour

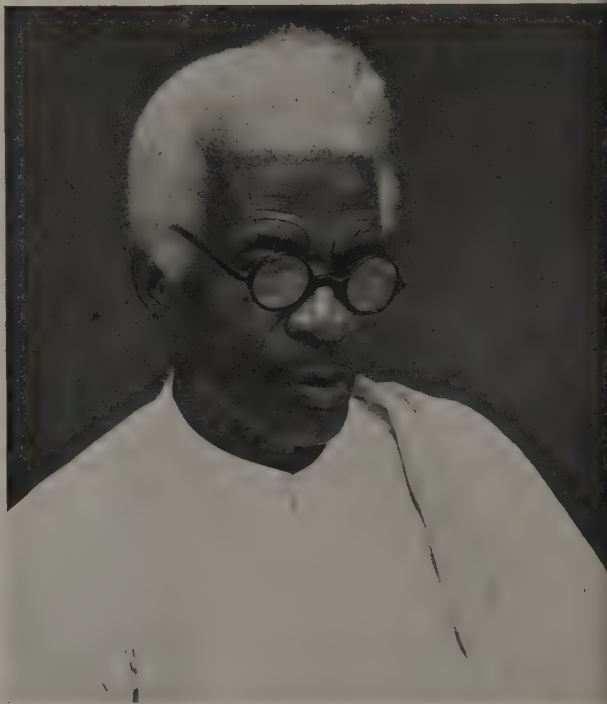
"As we neared Benin City we passed several human sacrifices, live women slaves gagged and pegged on their backs to the ground, the abdominal wall being cut in the form of a cross, and the uninjured gut hanging out. These poor women were allowed to die like this in the sun. Men-slaves, with their hands tied at the back, and feet lashed together, also gagged, were lying about. As our white troops passed these horrors one can well imagine the effect on them—many were reduced to fury, and many of the younger ones felt sick and ill at ease. As we neared the City, sacrificed human beings were lying in the path and bush—even in the King's compound the sight and stench of them was awful. Dead and mutilated bodies seemed to be everywhere—by God! may I never see such sights again! Just before we came upon these horrors an old man appeared from behind a big tree which had fallen across the bush path we were following. He was using bow and arrows, and believed (as we were told afterwards) that he was invulnerable. He was, however, shot. In the King's compound, on a raised platform or altar, running the whole breadth of each, beautiful Idols were found. All of them were caked over with human blood, and by giving them a slight tap, crusts of blood would, as it were, fly off. Lying about were big bronze heads, dozens in a row, with holes at the top, in which immense carved ivory tusks were fixed. One can form no idea of the impression made on us. The whole place reeked of blood. Fresh blood was

dripping off the figures and altars (months afterwards, when we broke up these long altars, we found that they contained human bones). Most of the men are in good health but these awful sights rather shattered their nerves."

This is an extract from "A Diary of a Surgeon with the Benin Punitive Expedition"

The present, and eighth, Ezomo of Benin, Chief Omoruyi, whose ancestor Ehenua, a great warrior in the late 17th century, persuaded the then Oba to make the title hereditary. Previously it had only been bestowed for life

All photographs by the author



written by Felix N. Roth, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., an appendix to the book *Great Benin* by H. Ling Roth (S. King and Sons, 1903).

The success of the Punitive Expedition closed a long chapter in the history of Benin.

The British Expedition of 1897 which conquered Benin had been sent to avenge the massacre of a peaceful party under the leadership of an acting Consul-General, Mr Phillips. This party, unfortunately, persisted in an attempt to reach Benin in spite of advice not to do so, as the time was unpropitious because of a religious festival in progress there.

The sights seen in Benin earned it the title "The City of Blood". The impression was given in accounts by members of the Expeditionary Force, and in subsequent writings, that the Bini spent most of their time sacrificing human victims in commercial quantities.

This, in fact, was very far from the truth though human sacrifice for religious purposes was undoubtedly constantly practised in Benin, as it has been in other parts of the world including, at one time, the British Isles. The sacrifice of numbers was only done at times of great disaster: the Expedition was the greatest disaster that Benin had suffered for probably a thousand years. In consequence, a panic-stricken and frantic court sacrificed on a gigantic scale—as no doubt did the powerful nobles also—with the result that the Bini were stigmatized as a bloodthirsty race, a people commonly of cruel and barbarous habits.

The Expedition in its approach march to Benin through the smelling swamps and dark forests which protected the City suffered great hardships and terrors, which must have contributed to the impression of horror made upon its members by the sacrifices; and the mud walls of the houses no doubt added to the impression of the backwardness of the people. Yet there is sufficient evidence in accounts given of Benin by early travellers to show that it was at one time a spacious city with splendid buildings standing in broad streets, though much of this splendour had disappeared by the time of the Expedition. What remained was effectively destroyed by the accidental fire which swept the city shortly after its conquest. However, even now it is evident, especially from the air, that



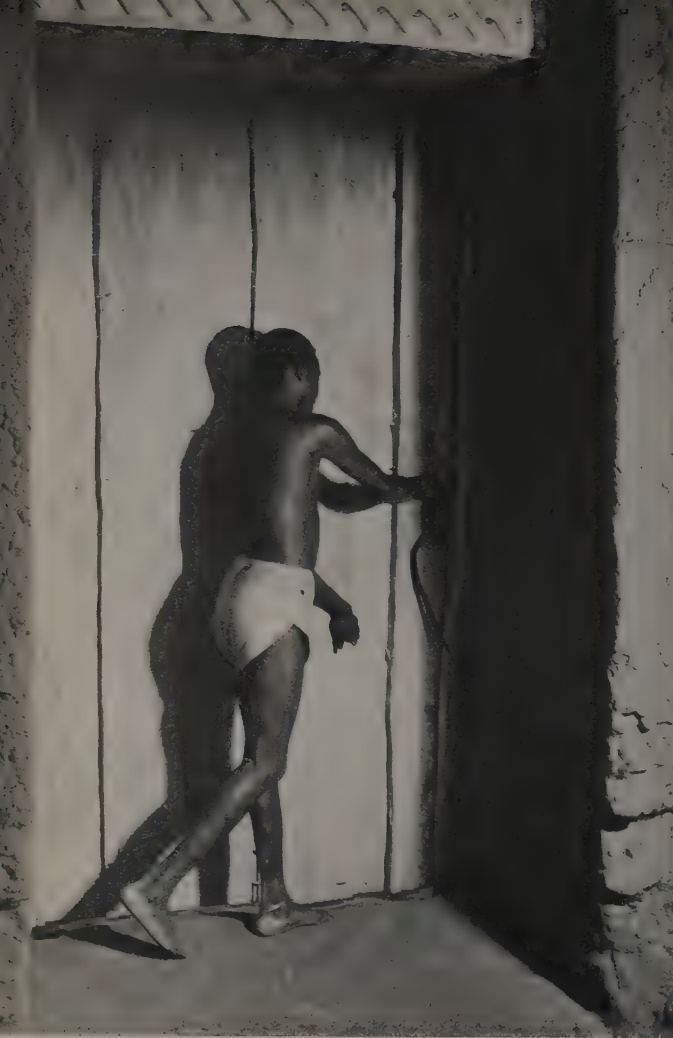
A. J. Thornton

Benin must have been a spaciouly planned city and not a mere collection of mud-built houses thrown up by a primitive people.

In spite of the prominence given to Benin by accounts of the horrors encountered there by the Expeditionary Force it is not these which have made Benin known throughout the world, but the great store of wonderful bronze, ivory and wooden objects found in the city: "beautiful Idols were found"—though they were no more idols than are the carved figures to be found on tombs and the façades of churches all over the world, or the ancestral portraits which decorate the walls of houses.

It was no accident that Benin was found to be so full of works of art, nor is it accidental that, in spite of the shattering impact of Western occupation, Benin has preserved much of its culture and traditional customs, for it was for centuries a proud city-state accustomed to the tribute of peoples brought under its influence by the determined expeditions of its war captains.

The historical continuity found in Benin must be unique in Africa and certainly nothing comparable is to be found in West Africa. The Bini think historically and are able to recite the names of the thirty-eight Obas of Benin of the present dynasty who have reigned, in direct descent, for over six hundred years—and can also give the names of rulers of Benin prior to that period. For all that time the Bini were an independent and sovereign people, free from the disruptions caused amongst other peoples of the West



A senior sword-bearer opening the great door of the Oba of Benin's Ancestor Compound. More junior sword-bearers wear many anklets; one indicates high rank in the Oba's retinue

Coast by the constant wars of the latter centuries, which have destroyed so much of the African's cultural heritage and obscured his origins.

It was this freedom from outside domination which allowed Benin to develop a way of life of considerable individuality. The bronze, ivory and wooden objects discovered in the city by the Expedition, and subsequently dispersed about the world as coveted

items in collections formed, principally, in Britain and Germany, played an important part in this way of life. Many, if not most, of them were used for ritual purposes on shrines and in ceremonies connected with the religious duties of the court.

Perhaps the most interesting thing today about the bronzes of Benin is that they are still made and used for their original religious and ceremonial purposes and also, though now very rarely, for their historical role of recording notable events.

In fact the strange, dynamic and tortured art of Benin is still alive and still finds patrons among the chiefs of Benin, who continue to have bronzes cast as did their ancestors before them for century after century. For instance, Chief Omoruyi, the Ezomo of Benin, owner of the Shrine of the Hand, was responsible for casting two of the plaques illustrated with this article.

Chief Omoruyi is the holder of one of the most senior titles in the Benin aristocracy, and it was his ancestor Ehenua who had the Shrine of the Hand cast in the late 17th century. This Ehenua was a great warrior and influenced the then Oba of Benin, Oba Akenzua I, to make the Ezomo title hereditary. Previously it had been bestowed for the lifetime of the holder only, in recognition of outstanding public services.

The present Ezomo is the eighth holder of the title but has not, as did all his ancestors before him, served the city-state in war, but has devoted his

considerable talents to administration and justice. An incident, which occurred some years ago, reveals the acute interest which this Benin aristocrat takes in political developments likely to affect his countrymen. He was talking one day with the Resident of Benin Province about an Administrative Officer, posted to Benin a short time before the conversation took place, who had brought with him his wife and three small children—white



All photographs by Ian Brinkwood

The Ancestor Compound of the Oba of Benin is bounded by high walls. Round the inside of these run broad verandahs roofed with corrugated iron which house his ancestral shrines, with stylized heads and numerous objects used for religious and ceremonial purposes. Among them are specimens of the famous bronzes. Elephants being, with leopards, the royal beasts of Benin, many of the bronze heads of Obas are surmounted, as is the one shown here, by carved tusks. Certain other bronzes—for instance the Shrine of the Hand depicted on another page—were similarly adorned

Two of the shrines in the Ancestor Compound of the Oba of Benin. Enormous quantities of bronzes and objects carved in wood and ivory were removed after the Benin Punitive Expedition of 1897 and since then up to recent times there has been a steady flow to art collections all over the world. Though several examples remaining in the Oba's possession were made before the 15th century, the majority of the bronzes in this photograph are believed to have been cast since 1897, but this is by no means certain





The shrine of the Oba Ovonramwen who was ruler of Benin at the time of the Expedition in 1897; it is the further one in the photograph opposite. The central group shows the Oba seated with his attendants around him and leopards—a symbol of royalty—at his feet. In front of this group are stone axes, known locally as thunderbolts, with bronze bells in a semicircle on either side. At the back is a collection of ritual staffs. The white marks are droppings from the birds which fly freely and unmolested about the Ancestor Compound





The Head and the Hand are specially revered in Benin. (Opposite) A Shrine of the Hand made by Ehenua, the first hereditary Ezomo of Benin, to celebrate his prowess in war. It is almost certainly the only bronze Shrine of the Hand in Benin today and is still in the possession of Ehenua's descendants who continue to use it as a shrine. (Above) A detail, showing Ehenua, with a magic symbol or protective 'medicine' on his helmet, and in his hand five ropes at the end of which are the severed heads of enemies killed in battle. Each of the first four was despatched by a single stroke of his sword but the fifth (the central head) needed a second stroke—an incident recorded in the gash across the victim's face



Bronze-casting is still encouraged by the chiefs of Benin. This plaque was cast to the order of the present Ezomo in honour of his mother, a chief in her own right. Although made only about thirty years ago the workmanship is excellent, if inferior to much of the earlier work



A head of a Queen Mother, probably of the 16th century. The two central marks on the forehead and the pupils of the eyes are of iron inlay. An identical head, but standing on a bronze base, was recently bought by the Nigerian Government for £5500 at a sale in London



Chief Ineh, head of the hereditary guild of bronze-smiths, working on the figure of an Oba. By his left hand is the clay core on which bees-wax is moulded and in front of him are the sheets of bees-wax and the simple tools used in the cire-perdue method of casting. When the wax figure is completed (as on the right) it is covered in a layer of clay and bound with wire for strength. A further layer of clay is then applied. The mould is left open at one end so that when it is heated the wax escapes and can be replaced by molten bronze

children were still a rare novelty in the country and three all together, and in one family, were a sensation. "You know, Resident," said the Ezomo, "when a man has white ants in his house he does not worry very much; but when they begin to breed . . .!" So he conveyed, with his usual gentleness of manner and tact, the apprehension he, and no doubt others, felt at the unusual introduction of white children. It would be hard to express with greater imagery and economy of words the distress felt at the prospect of European settlement. All the difference felt by the African between European administration and settlement is summed up in this one sentence.

Although the craft of bronze-casting is still actively carried out in Benin, and the guild of hereditary bronze-smiths still holds an honoured, if diminished, place in Benin society, the practice of the craft is now much restricted and, while casting in the round is still common, the making of plaques has practically ceased. When one is made it shows cruelly the incertitude of craftsmen grown unfamiliar with this form of work. The groups of figures so commonly found in collections of Benin work are no longer made at all, for they often require a communal effort in the casting which has become socially and economically impossible.

Most of the work now carried out in Benin is done mainly in two centres: the traditional street of the bronze-smiths and the Institution run by the Benin Native Authority under the direction of Chief Ineh, the hereditary chief of the guild, and himself a most skilled craftsman. In both these places much good work is done, but also much that is repetitive and undistinguished, intended for the souvenir trade which has done so much harm to the art of bronze-casting in West Africa. The Benin bronze-smiths, under the influence of a nameless official, were once even set to casting "See no Evil, Hear no Evil, Speak no Evil" brass monkeys on the grounds that these revolting objects represented real "Art" and would be appreciated and bought by Europeans. They were.

Benin wood-carving, less known than the bronze and ivory work because little of it has survived, was virtually killed by the souvenir trade during the war, when itinerant traders found that the market among British and American troops and visiting civilians was almost limitless for ebony busts of women with bared breasts. These atrociously executed objects are still sold in quantity to travellers at the airports of Nigeria for use as

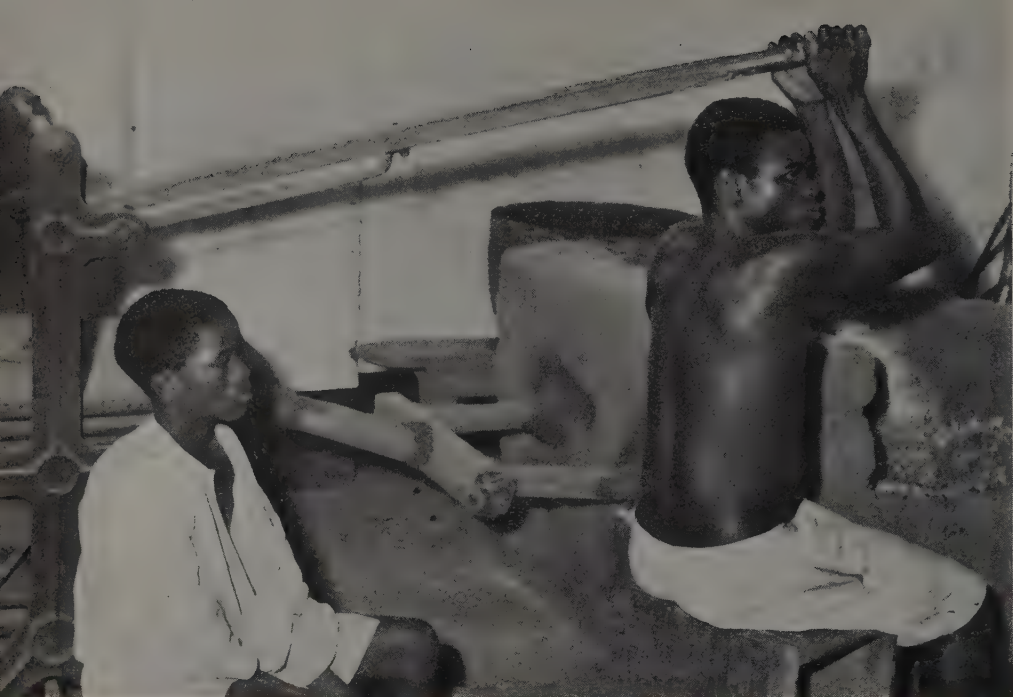


A wax figure of an Oba awaits its clay covering

book-ends. The set now usually consists of a bust of a man and one of a woman. They are produced *en masse* and almost on an endless belt system. Very few, if any, of them are now made in Benin as the traders have happily discovered that there is more profit when production units are sited nearer to the consumer.

The bronze-smiths of Benin attained an extraordinary degree of skill in their art and the best examples cannot be matched by craftsmen in other parts of the world. By rule of thumb and with the simplest of equipment they produced bronzes, cast in the *cire-perdue* method, in which the metal is as little as one millimetre in thickness.

There has been much speculation about



(Above) The great bellows used to keep the furnace fire burning fiercely. Ducts to the furnace can be seen between the two men. (Below) The furnace in which the clay moulds are placed to heat and melt the wax. Around the centre are crucibles being heated before the bronze is put in them to melt





(Above) A craftsman removing a mould from a furnace. When an important bronze is cast the Oba pours the metal from the first crucible, followed by other chiefs; the tongs are then placed on shrines and never used again. (Below) Lowering a mould into a hole in the ground; it is buried up to the neck





(Above) A chief of the bronze-smiths' guild pouring molten bronze from a crucible into the space in the mould left when the melted wax was poured away. (Below) After the mould filled with bronze has cooled, it is taken from the earth and the clay chipped off; the bronze is then filed and polished





(Left) A plaque of Ehenua's mother, cast in the 17th century. It closely resembles that of the present Ezomo's mother illustrated in the photogravure section; the costumes are especially alike. (Right) A plaque of Chief Omoruyi, the present Ezomo, with attendants and sword- and umbrella-bearers. The workmanship shows modern craftsmen's unfamiliarity with the art of plaque-casting

when bronze-casting was first introduced into Benin. The Portuguese are usually credited with having done so, but it is hard to believe that so vigorous and prolific a school of artists should have been so rapidly established by the few members of an alien race who from time to time visited the city, chiefly for the purpose of trading. The first Portuguese known to have visited Benin, and who left accounts of his visit, was d'Aveiro. He visited the city in about 1484 but Sequeira, another Portuguese, may have visited it in 1472.

There are several bronze objects in the possession of the present Oba of Benin, Akenzua II, C.M.G., which support the contention that the art pre-dated the arrival of the Portuguese. These are, evidently, of great antiquity and have been in his family since long before the arrival of the first Portuguese. They are still in active use in ceremonies of a religious nature.

In spite of the great wealth of works of art revealed to the world by the conquest of Benin little curiosity seems to have been aroused regarding the nature of the people, their social organization and their customs. The reason for this indifference was, perhaps, in part at any rate, the fascinated repulsion excited among the members of the Expedi-

tionary Force of 1897 and spread by them. This repulsion can well be understood in the circumstances, but it is a pity that it has continued to influence for so long opinion about the nature of the Bini State, its people and culture.

Although so much has been written about the Benin bronzes, ivories and wood-carvings (much of it erroneous) very little attention has been paid to the remarkable structure of the Benin State, to its legends, often reminiscent of those of Ancient Greece, its military organization, or to the splendid costumes worn by the Oba and nobles of Benin and still sometimes to be seen on ceremonial occasions of importance. The dignity, colour and ritual of these leave the spectator in no doubt of the former greatness of the city-state.

The "Idols" referred to in the extract from "A Diary of a Surgeon with the Benin Punitive Expedition" were, in fact, objects used for religious or ceremonial purposes and often, in the admirable phrase of Mr Bradbury who is at present engaged on the first serious study ever made of Bini religious and political institutions, were "historical documents". It is in this light that they should be considered.

Pastoral Exmoor

by H. EARDLEY-WILMOT

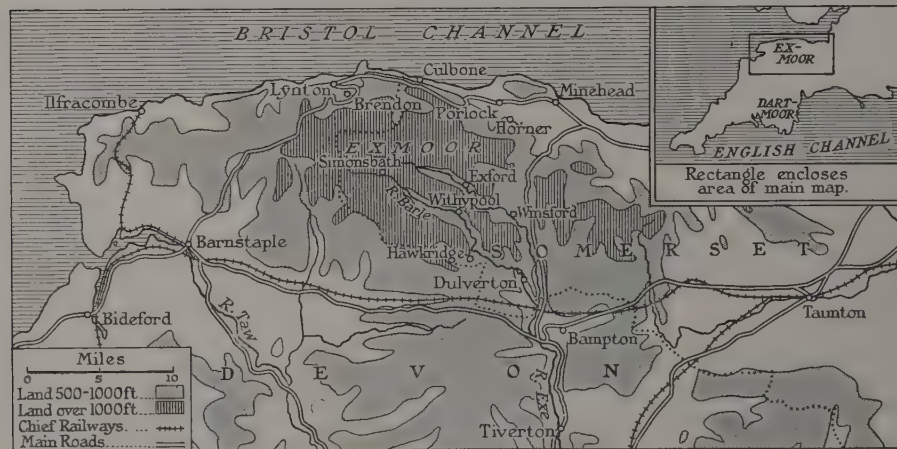
'Wild' Exmoor, like almost every corner of England, has long borne the impress of man's hand. It will come as a surprise to many readers to learn when its uplands were tamed and by whom, and what skills are required to maintain and increase the part they play in our pastoral production

EXMOOR hills are broad-backed and fairly steep-sided. On top they are boggy, with bright green sphagnum in the iron-brown bog-water, and in June the silver-white bog-cotton shimmers in the wind. The valleys, which are seldom more than two fields wide at the bottom—one either side of the river—are folded in between the hills; only the lower slopes are hedged and tilled, and the farm-houses seem tucked into the hillsides, hidden first by treetops and then by the curve of the land. So from the top little is visible save what has hardly changed since Iberian times: mile upon mile of sedge upland, with one or two barrows at the highest point of each considerable hill. Sheep and cattle browse; the sedge-grass is succulent if it is kept grazed down, and the animals seem to prefer the boggy summits. These, and perhaps a herd of wary wild ponies, a few black-game or snipe, or a buzzard sailing watchfully above a hidden valley, may be your only company for hours; unless a farmer or shepherd passes, on horseback, doing his round, a visitor may forget how near the farm-life is.

This is the real forest of Exmoor—this bare hill-country of green and bronze sedge-grass, with deep combes, and streams hurrying downhill everywhere to feed clear, narrow,

but very lively little rivers, which may rise to torrents and flood the meadows after an hour or two of heavy rain. Trees are not indigenous; farmers have planted them in the valleys for shelter, but in the 17th century there were only two in the whole forest, Kite Oak and Hoar Oak, both famous boundary-marks. The green moor, Exmoor proper, is three-parts encircled by heather moor, which day-trippers from Lynton or Minehead enjoy, and leave littered. The woods of Horner and Culbone and Dulverton are outside that, where the land falls away steeply to the east; on the north, wooded cliffs drop down to the Bristol Channel. Westward and southward, the country changes less dramatically to the cultivated parts near Barnstaple and the broad vale of mid-Devon, with the sterner heights of Dartmoor in the distance.

To an urban stranger nowadays, it sounds like an ancient riddle: a forest without trees, a moor without heather, standing water on the hilltops and dry fields lower down. It is ancient indeed, but the riddle is a fair one; two at least of the answers are easy. The moor-pan on a flat hilltop is no puzzle for a geographically-minded reader. When the pan is pierced, the water drains down into the hill at once—"as through a colander", said a



A. J. Thornton



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(Above) Wild Exmoor ponies grazing on a windy summit. These treeless boggy hilltops are the true Forest of Exmoor, unchanged through the centuries. (Below) The Barle valley from above Withypool. In the comparative shelter of the valleys, sheep and a few cattle can be wintered in the small fields

A. Vincent Bill

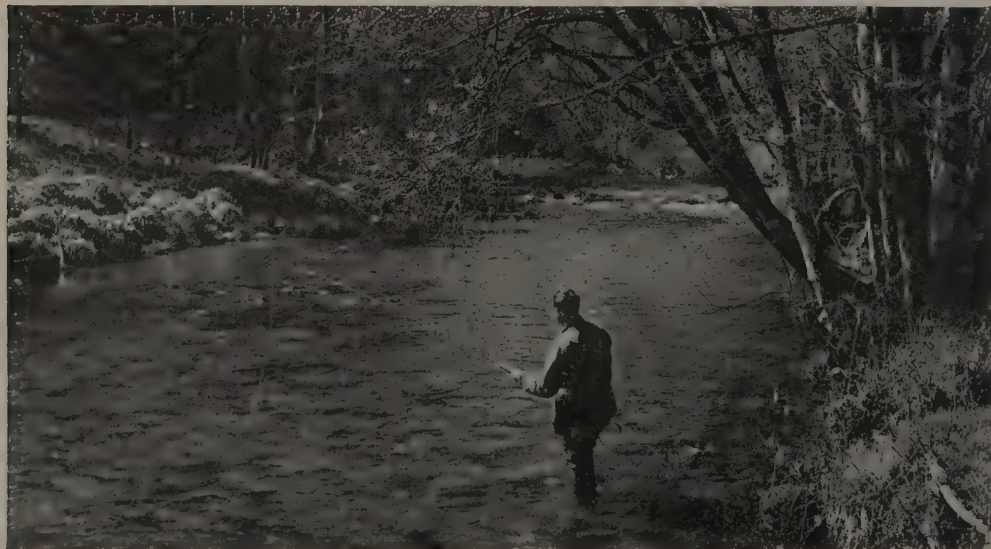




Leonard & Marjorie Gayton

(Above) Lanacre Bridge over the Barle. In drought, a rider can walk his horse under the arches; in flood-time they are none too high. (Below) Trout-fishing above Dulverton; the Barle has left the Forest and got among trees. Below Dulverton it joins the much smaller Exe, and loses its name

A. Vincent Bibbings





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The old bridge at Winsford. The Exmoor villages were nearly all built at fords, because until the late 19th century there were hardly any bridges except packhorse ones. Carts had to be taken through the water to get them across the river and this was only possible when the water was low

delighted observer in the 19th century, when they were doing it with a Sutherland plough and that anchor-like contraption called the Duke of Sutherland's toothpick. A forest without trees is not misnamed; it preserves the true meaning of the word, the land *outside*, the untilled, untamed land. In Exmoor speech the opposite is "in over"—the easy country towards Taunton and all beyond. Similarly Rosalind in the Forest of Arden spoke of "an old religious uncle . . . who was in his youth an inland man." But it often perplexes strangers. In 1940 a gentleman from in over was instructing the Exmoor Home Guard to take cover if an enemy plane flew low, and a farmer asked: "But what if I'm out on the forest? I can't take no cover then, can I?" "Surely", replied the visitor, "that's just where it's easiest?" An hour on top in cold wind and rain, without so much as a furze-bush or heather-clump for shelter, would have removed the misunderstanding.

A moor without heather may not be an anomaly. Which came first, the heather or

the sedge, is still an open question. Personally, I think the sedge began it, but the argument leads too far into uncertainties to be pursued here. The curious fact is that nearly all the heather grows on land which either never formed part of the Royal Forest—Brendon and Lynton—or else was disafforested in 1301—Culbone and Porlock, Exford and Withypool and Hawkridge. Today's green moor was Forest land, never cultivated, until the Crown sold it in 1818-19.

Mr John Knight, who bought 15,500 acres from the Crown, planned to reclaim all this as one farm. Summer grazing was traditional, but he believed that with careful 'improvement' the moor could become profitably self-sufficient. Given enclosure, drainage, and huge quantities of lime, it would, he thought, be equal to any demand a farmer liked to make of it. For nearly seventy years he and his son Sir Frederick poured energy and fortune, labour and anxiety, into the estate, and by the end of that time, after some long-drawn-out and expensive mistakes, the enter-



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An Exmoor farm on a south-facing slope. Farms are generally sited thus with the buildings halfway up the hillside where they are sheltered from the coldest wind and well out of danger from floods

prise was justified in the system of hill farms which exists today. In his main belief—that the land could produce much more, and be self-supporting—he was proved right; and farmers today speak admiringly of the far-sightedness which opened up the whole area with roads and enclosed it by walls and hedges into manageable units. “He thought so big,” one farmer after another of this third generation from the conquest will say; “’twas all on such a big scale. Think of the miles of good roads where there wasn’t nothing but packhorse tracks! And the labour—all they fences to be made by hand—scores an’ hundreds of men it must’ve taken! And all that land broken, and nothing but bullocks to do it with!”

It was a great achievement; but the result is not what John Knight envisaged. The moor is pastoral again, though now the many sheep and few cattle are bred and wintered on the hill farms, and the lower slopes grow winter feed for them. The elder Knight hoped to see it all covered with corn, and for several decades he and his son clung to that hope. It was curiously stubborn of them; living at Simonsbath, they must, one would have thought, have quickly realized the two powerful reasons against corn-growing here. “Too near ’eaven, for one thing,” a laconic farmer on one of their forest-farms told me,

some years ago; adding, to clinch it, the second reason: “Nine months’ winter, and three months’ dam’ bad weather.” But the Knights were not the only people to be so sanguine. Between 1914 and 1918, government insistence on corn-growing led to pitiful fiascos, and again between 1939 and 1945 farmers had to meet patiently various well-intentioned but laughably unpractical suggestions. In a wet summer—and that is frequent—it is difficult even to snatch a hay-harvest. A farmer depending on the sale of corn would very soon go mad or bankrupt; his neighbours would say he had been mad ever to try.

Yet nearly all the characteristics of Exmoor today—apart from the natural ones—are due to the Knights. Later experiments in what the soil and climate will allow have followed naturally from theirs. They had the dry-stone walls built, to enclose huge ‘allotments’ of rough grazing over the boggy hilltops. They made the roads, with a surface that would take carts laden with the essential lime, which had to be brought long distances, mainly uphill; and because these roads run right over or along the hilltops, most of them had to be protected on both sides by beech ‘fences’, so that they could be used in all but the very worst weather. When John Knight’s plan of farming the whole forest himself had proved



R. Kingsley To

Exmoor 'fences' are earth banks, walled with stone and turf, and planted with beech-hedges. From time to time the trees are cut back and laid. The fences are at their most beautiful when the upward growth has been undisturbed for some years. Ferns and mosses, delicate and very green, settle in every cranny of the grey stone; they love the damp air under the beech-boughs' shade.

(Above) Sheep sheltering from snowy winds, in an Exmoor road. In "the bad winter", early in 1947, roads like this were filled with snow to the top of the beeches, and some remained blocked for a month or more. Some farmers had to dig their sheep out of deep drifts in corners or hollows of the fields. The threat of such foul weather hangs over an Exmoor farmer every year, though the desperately bad winters may come only three or four times in a lifetime.

(Right) In summer the fences provide welcome protection from wet west winds. Here part of the flock, after shearing, has taken shelter from a shower of rain





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Grass is the basic Exmoor crop: new methods add to its value, reduced by rain-laden Atlantic winds.

(Above) Spraying with chemicals has here eradicated wet-loving rushes; beyond is land not sprayed.

(Below) A machine gathers grass into a hopper for artificial drying, which makes sure of the crop

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"It's the farmer's eye that fattens the stock." Ponies and dogs help in his daily work with sheep and cattle. The sheep are the more important stock. (Above) Near Withypool, father and son count and inspect ewes and lambs. (Below) Bringing beef-cattle in from reclaimed land on higher ground

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too costly, his son carved out smaller but sizable farms with a fair proportion of hill and valley to each, built farmhouses, and found tenants from other parts of England who would face the isolation, the winter bleakness, and the pioneer work.

Many of the first tenants went bankrupt, or gave up in dismay; notably one from Wiltshire who had intended dairy-farming, but was horrified when he realized the difficulty of getting the milk to any market. But as more and more fields in the valleys and on the slopes were fenced and drained and ploughed and limed, local men, or Scots who had come down as shepherds with the Knights' big flocks of Cheviots, took over the tenancies. Concentrating on stock-raising, and also taking in sheep and bullocks from the lowlands for summer keep on the hill sedge, they began to do well, and steadily more and more of the rough country was reclaimed. This process still goes on; a few years ago I saw a reasonably good first crop of hay being loaded onto the cart from a new field, near the top of a southward-sloping hill, which had been ploughed to the subsoil and limed. Encour-

aged by this, and by the marginal land subsidy, the farmer was beginning to take in a piece more, higher still. The increasing use of tractors—when the farmer can afford one—is of course making it quicker and easier to plough and lime and sow and reap near the hilltops, some 200 feet above the farm-buildings; but a tractor and its paraphernalia may cost about £800, and on a small farm this is a very big outlay in relation to profits. And the high fields could probably never be as useful as the fenced ones lower down.

The Exmoor 'fences', which have been as important as drainage to the development of the land, are hedges of laid beech, growing out of banks four, five or six feet high, and at least a yard wide at the base; these are like parallel walls of stone and turf, sloping slightly inward, the space between being packed with earth. The horizontal trunks, now about a century old, are big and strong; the uprights are allowed to grow to about fifteen feet, nowadays, before they are cut back again. When the fences border a lane, they will cover a waggon or lorry loaded with hay or wool. They are fine wind-breaks on the hills, though

At Exford Show: Exmoor Horns, arrayed for the judge to select the champion sheep of the year. In many a farm-parlour a large framed photograph of a prize-winning animal is proudly displayed

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The autumn sales—climax of the sheep-farmer's year. For the next few weeks the farmer will be a little less busy and may now look forward to an occasional day with the staghounds on his pony

I have heard a farmer at 1300 feet complain that they make the snow pile up in drifts instead of blowing away, and increase the risk of losing sheep. They are also good breakwaters in the valleys, in any ordinary flood, but the immense force of the swollen rivers after the Pinkery cloudburst in August 1952 swept lengths of them clean away, leaving only the stones strewn along the next meadows. I saw one stretch, about thirty feet long, which the river, rushing round a bend, had torn up, base and all, swung round like a gate opening, and left lying on its side at a right angle to where it had stood. People were anxiously wondering how the fences could be replaced; the building of the banks, with proper space for the saplings to spread their roots and grow, was skilled work, two and three generations ago, and there is nobody left who really knows how to do it. "I might put one up," said one farmer, "but I should know enough to know it would fall down." So far, their place is taken only by post-and-wire fences, which serve to divide pastures but do nothing else.

On the land the Knights reclaimed, most of the farms run from river to ridge on one side of the stream or both. The lower slopes are divided by more fences into small sheltered fields, where oats and barley and roots can be grown, and where the animals can get

some protection from the wet wind, whichever way it blows; this is particularly important when the lambing ewes are down near the house, in March. The farmhouses are about halfway up the hillside, partly for the convenience of being in the middle of the farm, but partly because of the severe cold higher up, and the danger of flood lower down. (The villages, which are much older, and all except Simonsbath outside the true Forest, take the risk of flood, since they were built at fords.) As most of the valleys run east and west, most of the farmhouses are built on the north slope, with the hill at their backs to keep out the worst cold, and a blank right shoulder to the prevailing westerlies, which come up from the Atlantic loaded with rain. Farmers to the south of the valleys—they are fewer, and on the land the Knights reclaimed, none—are heavily handicapped. The hills are steep enough to throw shadow down the lower slopes until far into the morning, and again for an hour or two before sunset, from August until April, and the difference can be decisive for the harvest in a difficult year.

Sheep lost in snowdrifts; sheep drowning in flood; fenced fields for the lambing ewes; lorries loaded with bales of wool, passing along the lanes in winter and leaving wisps hanging from the bare twigs, as though from a distaff—the theme recurs, for this is sheep-

country above all. The cattle are valuable, but a side-line. It is still impracticable to send milk away; formerly the farmer's wife made and sold butter, all the year round, but now there is a better market for scalded cream, the delight of summer visitors, and this is an important source of ready money. Even so, the calves get plenty of milk, and each farm has its healthy North Devon yearlings, and its two-year-old home-bred bullocks to be sold for 'finishing' elsewhere, and its heifers kept for breeding. Lately, government subsidy has encouraged the agistment of lowland cattle on the hilltops again, for in summer there is rough grazing to spare. Like the cuckoo and the August stag-hunters, the strange cattle come, and are welcome, and go, and, in the sad words of an old man, "leave the winter to we". But the flock is the chief and incessant care.

The owner or tenant is usually his own shepherd, and with the help of one good dog—whose skill is often one of the simpler wonders of the world—he does the day-to-day work, all the year round, for his flock of five or six hundred. In essence, the care of sheep does not change much from century to century. The dip may be stronger and more scientifically concocted; ointments and antiseptics for minor wounds may be better; some of the shearing is done by electric power; a telephone may bring the vet to a bad case—though the distances and steep roads, and the incidence of fog and flood and frost and snow, make that last refuge less dependable than in the lowlands. But in the main the shepherd's year is much what it always was.

In March the lambing has him out with his hurricane lamp in the cold night. Day or night, there are orphan lambs in boxes by the kitchen fire, or, tragi-comically clothed in the skin of a dead one, penned in the garden or barn, each with a ewe who has lost her own and may be hoodwinked into adopting this. There are lambs to be bottle-fed; and sometimes one, almost dying, to be popped into the warm oven in a last attempt at resuscitation. But unless the weather is cruelly wet, and the ewes weak and miserable with sodden fleeces, the farmer and his wife find in the ceaseless work of lambing-time a satisfaction much deeper than considerations of price. Once the exhaustion is over, and the April sun shining, the charm and absurdity of the lambs curvetting in the hilly fields, white beside their grey mothers, is a delightful reward. Then they must be guarded at night by mommets—scarecrows—holding lighted lanterns; these are supposed to deceive the foxes. Sometimes

they do, if a wind is blowing; sometimes the fox calmly kills the lamb right under the momet's nose.

Shearing has been eased by the use of electricity, though that is not yet universal. Traditionally, two or three or four neighbours work together at this. Since it is simpler to move the implements from one man's barn to another's than to drive the sheep several miles, they deal with the flocks in turn, over several days. It is fascinating to watch them working; one man clips the main fleece by electricity, while one or two others prepare sheep for him by hand-clipping round the horns and face. Like most highly skilled work, it goes fast and looks easy; anybody taken in by appearances should try to hold a frightened sheep in position, and then observe how very seldom the ointment standing near for cuts is needed. When the job is finished, there is a good tea for the shearers—pale modern shadow of the feast which, until about sixty years ago, was prolonged with singing and dancing far into the night. Nowadays, the single-handed farmers must hurry home.

For dipping, too, neighbours join forces; and the baaing and barking, and the shouts and cries as a flustered animal breaks away from the mouth of the trough, carry the news up and down the quiet valleys: "They'm dipping today, to Blackland." Finally there are the autumn sales, the culmination of the sheep-farmer's year. Here, in a village or small town on the edge of the moor, he sells the wether-lambs, keeping the ewes for breeding. He is paid, in satisfaction and in cash, for the months of care; he can relax, for a lot of trouble is safely off his hands. Neighbours from miles around are there—for the whole moor is a neighbourhood. It is a great day out.

With luck, he can go home from the sale to a month or two of comparative leisure. The small harvest is in; lambing is five months ahead, and snow will probably not come until after Christmas. Between now and then he can enjoy himself; now, if ever, he can get about and visit his friends. Now he can have an occasional day with the staghounds, when, using all his close knowledge of the moor and of every animal's ways, he will gallop his pony down steep paths in perfect confidence and urge him by a short cut up the opposite hillside, where perhaps the view opens exhilaratingly to distant Dartmoor, or across the channel to the mountains of Wales. He will remember the hunt in detail for years. It seems strange that some townspeople would rather he went to the pictures.